AMSTRAD ACTION

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Created on Amstrad keyboards for Amstrad users by Amstrad addicts

No.3 DECEMBER 1985 £1

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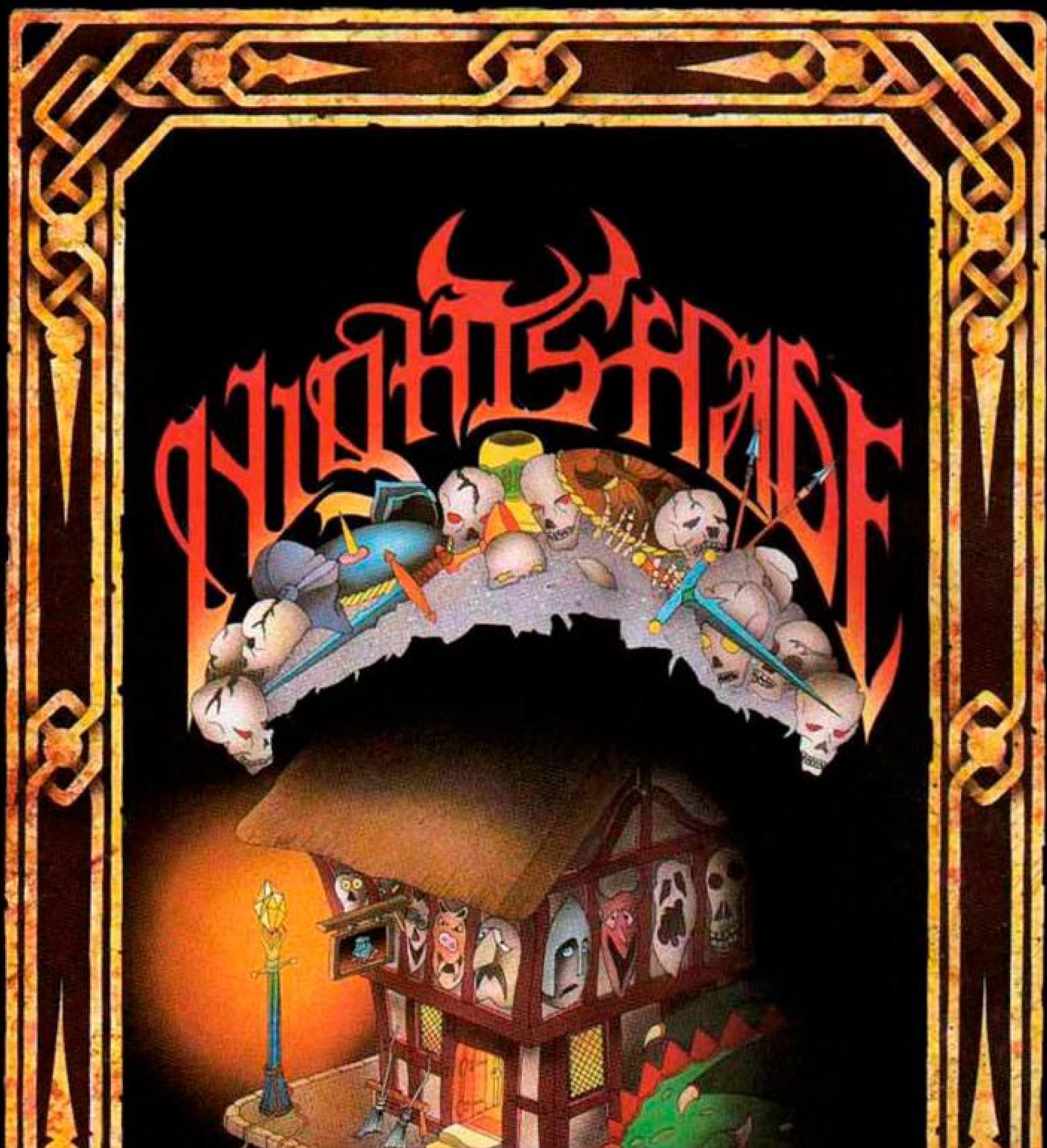
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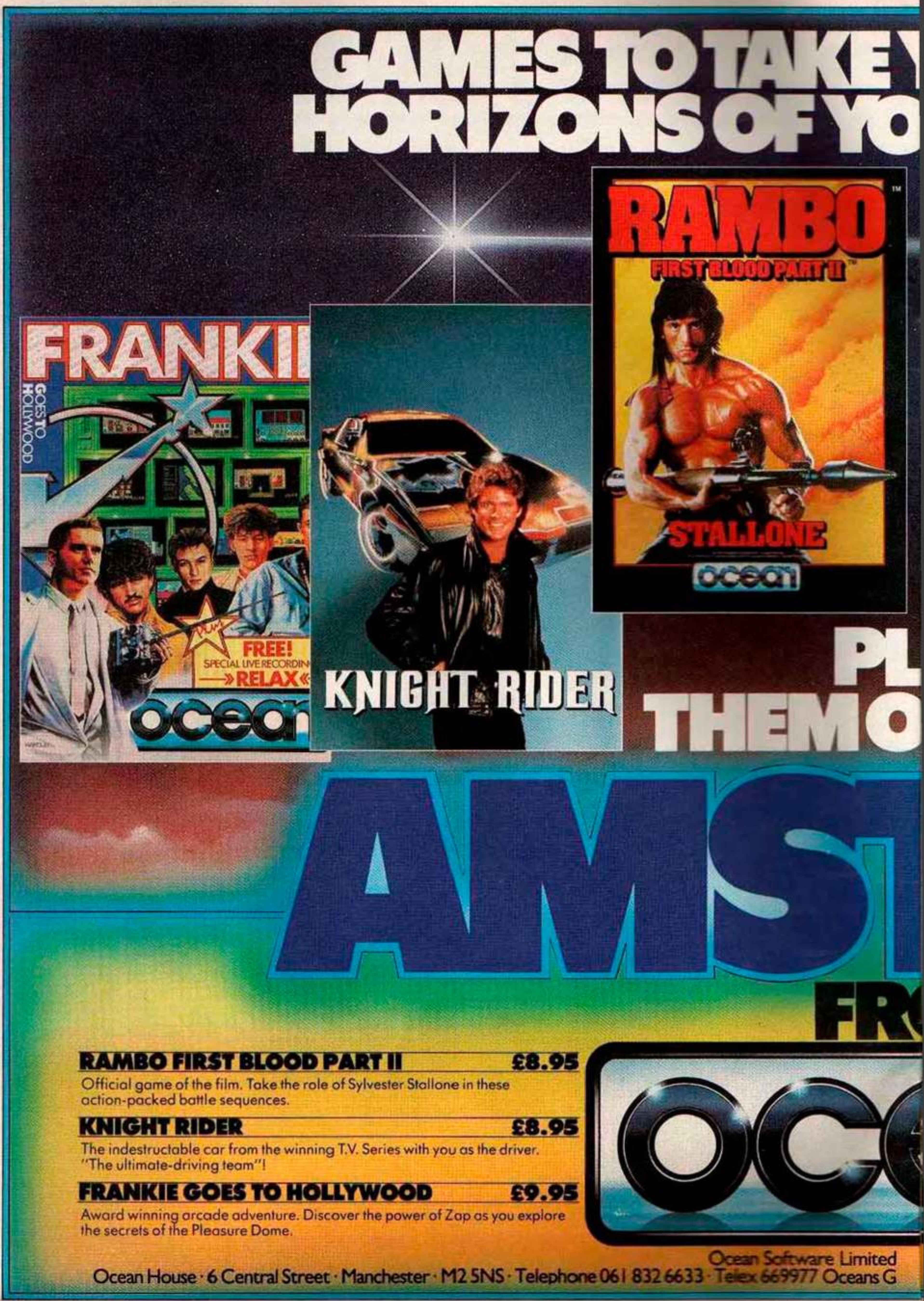
AMSTRAD ACTION DECEMBER 1985

HOT REVIEWS

DECEMBER SPECIALS

JUICY OFFERS

ACTION REGULARS


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Dear Readers,

Welcome once again to another action-packed issue of Amstrad Action – an issue in which many of the changes we mentioned last month have been implemented. We think they'll make it a more enjoyable and a more informative magazine. But let us know what you think. Any disagreement, however violent, will be heeded and – possibly – even printed in next month's ReAction.

The major innovation, of course, is the inclusion of type-in programs. We've tried to ensure that these are easy to key in and won't produce those dispiriting 'Syntax Error' messages that make you want to scream. The programs we've printed should give you an idea of what your Amstrad is capable of in the way of graphics. And remember – if you've written a program you think is pretty hot, send it in to our Listings Editor. You never know; it might bring you nationwide fame and a nice cash reward.

You'll notice that Biz Progs has disappeared to be replaced by a new section – Serious Software. This has been done because we felt that we wanted to bring you news of a wider range of software than the previous title would allow for. So in future you'll be reading about the whole range from Assemblers to Accounts Packages in Serious Software.

Down here in deepest Somerset summer turned pretty quickly to autumn. And then winter. Huddled around the log fire, the AA Team warm their insides with scrumpy and whisper conspiratorially. What they're doing is cooking up a bumper Yuletide issue – the sort of thing you'd trade in your Christmas Pud to get your hands on. Don't miss it.

Pete Connor.

Amstrad Action
Valeside
West Street
Somerton
Somerset TA11 7PS
Tel: 0458-74011

(This is the address for all editorial matters and for subscriptions, but not for advertising)

EDITOR: **Peter Connor**
SOFTWARE EDITOR: **Bob Wade**
ART EDITOR: **Trevor Gilham**
ASSISTANT ART EDITOR: **George Murphy**

PUBLISHER: **Chris Anderson**
PUBLISHER'S ASSISTANT: **Diane Tavener**

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER: **Alan Towler** (Tel: 01-221-3592)

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Wanted – Cartoonists

Amstrad Action is looking for regular cartoonists to inject much-needed wit and style into our pages. We want you to submit catoons related to computing, and Amstrad computing in particular. Cartoons that will have us rocking with laughter. Cartoons that bite with savage wit. Cartoons that make us cry with their poignancy. You get the picture.

When we get your pictures we'd like them to be in ink – preferably black – on plain paper. Please don't use colour. The cartoon idea matters more to us than great draughtsmanship, since the AA ArtTeam can add subtle embellishments to your drawings if they need any. With Christmas looming you might like to bend your thoughts to commenting on the season of goodwill and overindulgence – but don't feel you have to stick to that.

We hope to print lots and lots of your funny, sad etc. pictures. You can submit as many as you like. The cartoonists we like best will be asked to produce work for us regularly and will be rewarded with money as well as fame. So dust off those drawing boards NOW.

Send you artistic efforts to: Cartoons, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

Competition Winners

There was a huge response to the *Boulderdash* and *Way of the Fist* competitions in our first issue – despite the fact that *Fist* had some pretty weird instructions.

But Di, after spending a couple of days picking out the winners, has come up with fifty names per comp. These fortunate people should at this very minute be chopping, kicking or digging their time away.

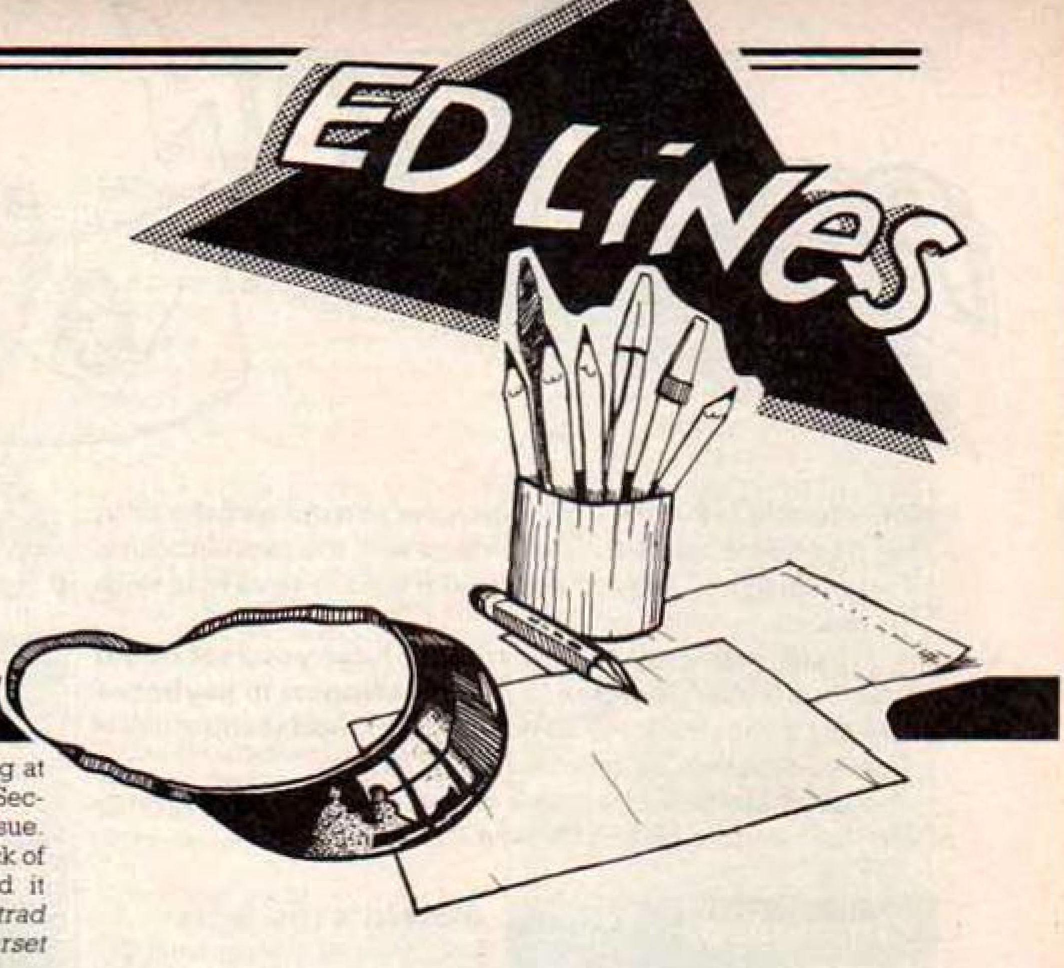
Exploding Fist

Paul Holloway, Newport, Shropshire; **Mr D N Lane**, Penzance, Cornwall; **J Starmer**, Nottingham; **Charles Joynson**, Bradford; **P Soundry**, Kinloss Forres, Scotland; **Michael Halpin**, Bridgwater, Somerset; **Vincent Moran**, Eastbourne; **M Saville-Horsell**, Stanmore, Middlesex; **Sean Fisher**, West Bromwich, West Midlands; **Iain Macintyre**, Glasgow; **Miss N M Matthews**, Nuneaton; **Martin Tipton**, Leicester; **Robin Makinson**, Sheffield; **Simon Bloomer**, Manchester; **K M Koenlowski**, Matlock, Somerset; **Jethro & Daniel Buckley**, Whitworth, Lancs; **Stephen Hall**, Kendal, Cumbria; **Barry O'Neill**, Romford, Essex; **Lee Thorne**, Wimblington, Cambs; **Lee Hutton**, Alton, Hants; **Paul Hoare**, Carshalton, Surrey; **Nicholas White**, Plymouth; **T J Fisher**, London SE27; **Mr R Brewitt**, Stamford, Lincs; **Stephen Wilkie**, High Wycombe, Bucks; **A J Bennett**, Richmond, Surrey; **D Clowser**, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd; **Mr J Mortuza**, London E13; **Francis Glennon**, Nelson, Lancs; **David Johnson**, Benson, Oxfordshire; **D T Ashworth**, Theydon Bois, Essex; **James McCann**, Brampton, Cambs.

C McCleod, Elmesthorpe, Leicester; **David Glasgow**, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland; **Alex Stein**, Sherborne, Dorset; **P Waller**, Gillingham, Kent; **Mr N Walling**, Leiston, Suffolk; **Ian Harrison**, Accrington, Lancs; **Mr P Tyler**, Solihull, West Midlands; **Mark Payne**, North Walsham, Norfolk; **Lisa Chase**, Eastleigh, Hants; **Mr Thomas Stone**, Glossop, Derbyshire; **Mrs K Spacey**, Shepton Mallet, Somerset; **Mr R Denton**, Torquay; **James Lennox**, Bangor, Co. Down, N Ireland; **D Baron**, Blackburn, Lancs; **Sarah Clarke**, Tottenham; **S Brewerton**, Beccles, Suffolk; **Robert Smith**, Shrewsbury, Shropshire; **Brian Hartley**, Reading.

Boulderdash

Mark Blakemore, Poole, Dorset; **Mark Blakewell**, Liverpool; **S Colwill**, Lifton, Devon; **Che Wall**, Maidstone, Kent; **Tracy Marsh**, Darwen, Lancashire; **Linda Wright**, Tring, Herts; **Paul Williams**, Chesterfield, Derbyshire; **Mark Morrall**, Barnsley, South Yorkshire; **John Bell**, Hayle, Cornwall; **Mark Royster**, Bury, Lancs; **Michael Davis**, Hatfield, Herts; **D A Griffiths**, High Wycombe, Bucks; **Neil Graham**, Faygate, Sussex; **Carl Bird**, Bolton; **A Southern**, Liverpool; **M H Jennings**, Tenterden, Kent; **William Leung**, Oldbury, West Midlands; **Mr D Champaneri**, Birmingham; **Mr Neil Holland**, Highbridge, Somerset; **Stuart Hutchinson**, Reading; **Mrs S Phillips**, Gravesend, Kent; **Martin Johnson**, Kirk Ella, Humberside; **Liam Daley**, Prestow, Lancs; **M A Skinner**, Burton-on-Trent; **D A Page**, Gillingham, Kent; **Michael Zanker**, Leeds; **Guy Hopkins**, Formby, Merseyside; **N Scott**, Livingston, West Lothian; **Mr J M Crawford**, Tiverton, Devon; **Ian Grainger**, Wingate, Co. Durham; **Chand Bhinder**, London N11; **Gavin Ritchie**, Carsie, Perthshire; **Mr F Toney**, London; **N Carter**, Dagenham, Essex; **Paul Bennett**, Rhondda, South Wales; **John Buck**, Whitby, North Yorkshire; **Jason Kelly**, Leeds 9; **Mr A R Smith**, RAF Lossiemouth; **Philip Knight**, St Annes-on-Sea, Lancashire; **Rukesh Kaura**, Brighton; **Mr D Ladson**, Sheffield; **Nick Chaplin**, Maidenhead, Berks; **James Cameron**, Glasgow; **Barry Davies**, Arbroath; **Mr M J Bensley**, North Walsham, Norfolk; **Malcolm Porteous**, Edinburgh; **Scott Sutters**, Bellshill, Lanarkshire; **Christina I Smith**, Goodwick, Dyfed, S W Wales; **Rupert Edis**, Winchester, Hampshire; **Stephen Walle**, Swansea; **Andrew Willis**, Barton, Northants



Mystery Reader

Last month we reported that not one single solitary copy of Amstrad Action 1 had been sold in Somerton. But shortly after the magazine went to press, one copy disappeared from the shop. We can't be sure it was actually bought, but all the signs seem to suggest that was the case.

Now we can reveal that Issue 2 has also sold one copy – a staggering 33.3% of newsagents' stock in this Somerset metropolis – or 'Royal Town of Ancient Wessex' as they like to say on the road signs. Please drive you horse and cart carefully through the town.

Voice of the People – Part 2

Last month we promised to print your opinions of the games we've reviewed. But because of the time factor, and the fact that we got a lot of pre-production software, we haven't been able to print any this month.

Fear not, though. Next month we'll do a retrospective Voice of the People, publishing your views of the games we reviewed in this issue. So there's still a good chance of expressing your feelings. And if you get your hands on the very latest stuff, pen a few lines and send them in pronto.

We've also come to the conclusion that virtue is, perhaps, not its own reward. So the opinions we like best – and they won't necessarily be the ones that agree with us – will be receiving a free piece of software from the AA vaults.

Remember to keep your stuff pretty short – no more than 80 words. You should be aiming at something on the lines of the Second Opinion boxes in this issue. Put it on a postcard or the back of an envelope only and send it to: *Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

What a show!

Along with 10,000 or so other enthusiasts, the AA Team made it to the Amstrad Show on October 5th and 6th – the one at the Novotel, that is. And what a show it was!

We took down 1,000 copies of Issue 2 and sold them all by 4.00 p.m on the second day. It was certainly a very enjoyable experience meeting so many of our readers and getting a first hand idea of their opinions – even the unflattering ones.

Some of you also got a lot more out of the show. Mrs. Pancott of Weymouth encountered a young man who was able to show her the way out of *Dun Darach*. But not everyone thought they needed to buy a copy of the magazine – a couple of younger 'readers' flicked through the pages, found the *Frank Bruno* tips, calmly made a note of them and proceeded on their way. Well, we're glad to have been of some service.

There was a staggering amount of software and peripherals on display at the show – we've got a full report with photos in Amscene. There will be another show at the Novotel on January 10th, 11th and 12th of next year. We'll be there – if you are too, then come and say hello.

Toot in hospital

Not because he's ill. No, he's just visiting a very sick friend and having a secret laugh about the trouble that car has given him. I always did think Toot had a very nasty streak in him. This latest Toot International Production was brought to you by Nicholas Coles of Alresford, Hampshire.







More lovely letters. It's all here – the sorrow and the pity, the ups and the downs, the swings and the roundabouts. You write in and editor Pete Connor tries to save face with his replies.

So if you want to let us know how you feel about Amstrad Action, put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and send the result to: *ReAction, Amstrad Action, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

And remember – some of these letters will be earning their writers FREE SOFTWARE.

Disgruntled, Glasgow

Amstrad Action, 'the one they never had in the shops', the one that's not likely to be in this newsagents and the one that's not likely to make it in the world of computing literature without the good will of those you have chosen to decry. Your advertising blurb in search of subscription customers is, to say the least, of a very offensive nature towards the very people who will be giving the reader his first opportunity to taste the undoubted delights of your literary genius.

After all is said and done, will the public say you're the one? I say not! If you're unable to grasp the basic fundamentals of the strategies of successful magazine marketing, then you have grasped a nettle in the first crucial moment of your being.

Notwithstanding, may your magazine go from strength to strength with every issue, for I at least know the interdependence that each of us has for the other in the search for profitability.

Alan Drummie (disgruntled newsagent)
East Kilbride, Glasgow

Mr. Drummie – you have every right to be disgruntled, after that insensitive phrase from an AA hack in Issue 1 about 'boneheaded newsagents'. We can only offer our humble apologies to you personally and to Britain's newsagents as a whole.



Arnold's the boss

Ever had that sinking feeling? I always get the mick taken out of my wonderful machine. Everyone else has a Commodore (yuck).

I have played some games on the crummy Commodore which I've got on the Amstrad – *Sorcery*, *Everyone's a Wally* – and they're horrible. When you load a game on the commy you must be very quiet. I won't even be allowed to eat my crisps. So tell those commies who's boss.

Simon Evans
Morden, Surrey

We've always said here at AA that Arnold is a computer you can be proud of. Stand up to your friends and don't take any nonsense. But we don't go in for abuse of other computers or their owners – we think it's beneath an Arnoldian's dignity to trade insults. You know you're doing OK, so why worry about the others?

Interaction

In all my years in computing since my ZX 81 your magazine is the only one I have written to, as it's so interactive with its users.

After buying your first issue I thought about subscribing but thought 'How could you possibly get better?' Looking throough issue 2, you have – and so you will shortly be receiving my cheque for your great special subscription offer.

On my questionnaire form I told you not to use 'sonics' in your games reviews and use 'sound' instead but you still are. Why is this?

Could you also please tell me how to get more than 112,000 on *Way of the Exploding Fist*, as I just can't see that this is possible. Is it using cheat modes?

Frederick Perkin,
Burton-on-Trent

We like to think that we're interactive and user-friendly – and that we'll go on improving. We always listen to readers' advice, but we don't usually take it when only one person seems to think in a certain way. As in the case of sound and sonics. You could try getting up a petition among readergs. As for Fist, take a look at he High Score pages – you may find an interesting challenge.

Owt for nowt

Managed to get hold of a copy of your mag at last. Read it from cover to cover and enjoyed every page. It takes something special to prise brass out of us hard-headed northerners but you'll get a lot of response from up here if you can keep up the standards set so far – and those offers! (if there's owt for nowt we're there with wheelbarrers.) Subscription, order for *Shadowfire* and *Spy v Spy*, competition entries and massive cheque enclosed. Get them goodies to me as fast as you can.

For me the most interesting items this month were the Software Reviews. I particularly liked the fact that you were so honest about games you did not like. However it does seem to me that some of your reviews could have benefitted from a longer association with each program as so many of the games I have bought in the last six months have failed to live up to their initial promise. Listed below are a few of those games with my own 'Bad News' comments on them.

MASTERCHESS: Can't play chess. An example played at level 9 with no forced moves. Arnold playing black. White opens 1.E2-E4. E7-E5. 2.F1-C4. G8-F6. 3. B1-C3. F8-C5. 4.C3-D5. F6-D5(?) 5.D1-F3. E4-F2(??) 6. D5-E3. F2- H1 (???) 7. F3-F7 CHECKMATE!!! Try it yourself.
SOFTWARE STAR: Overdoes the RND function. Any resemblance to serious business is purely a figment of the author's imagination. The kind of program that gives bosses a bad name.
HOLDFAST: Likely to turn would-be pacifists into enraged killers. If you have 77% or more support after negotiating you win, any less you lose. &10 for ten minutes working that out is a bit steep.
HUNTER KILLER: Quite amusing at first but soon palls when you realise that it is so easy to catch enemy vessels from the rear, timing your dives so as to reach 30(ft?) just as the depth charges explode and surfacing immediately. 50 kills in a couple of hours is not unrealistic but so boring. Strange things happen to the battery strength indicator when it goes over the top and once, when I left the sub running east at full speed, it went off the chart, pre-



sumably heading overland towards Berlin to finish the war on its own.

STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER: Great as long as you have a white ball to play with. Mine has a tendency to vanish in mid-shot. Arnold freezes solid (dumbfounded?) and refuses to co-operate further.

Fortunately for the software industry such games are quite rare (I hope)
and most of my collection more than make up for the odd lemon. My favourite at present is *Knight Lore*. Even though I have completed it a few times I'm still drawn back for more. I really must get hold of *Alien 8* one day. (Hint, hint.)

Finally a plea to the Pilgrim. Any chance of a series on standard puzzles likely to crop up in Adventure games? I foolishly invested in three Adventure games, *Erik the Viking*, *Emerald Isle*, and *Skull Lord*, but have yet to get started in any of them.

I look forward to the next issue popping through the letter-box and, should a suitably edited version of this letter make it onto you reader's page I would like... no, I won't be greedy, but please, please, please, not another adventure game.

R L Grant
Warrington, Cheshire

Thanks for the opinions Mr. Grant. We think you'll see fewer 'lemons' as time goes by. But what can you mean by 'Hint, hint'?



Agony and ecstasy

I read your letter in the second edition of AA about the mix up of the Amstrad Show. I was one of the unfortunate 'wallies' who went to the Tech West Centre after seeing it had been changed from the Novotel in Popular Computing Weekly.

When we got to the Tech West Centre on the door it said 'Amstrad Computer Show at Novotel'! We also met another man there who had done the same as us. Eventually we got to the Novotel and after queueing for about one hour we got in – and what a show it was. Will there be one next year?

John Black
Wymondham, Norfolk

I'm glad it was all worth it in the end. There will be another show at he Novotel on January 10th, 11th and 12th of next year. We'll be there again.

Nice people

I visited the Amstrad Computer Show at the Novotel in London and it was better than I ever could have imagined it to be.

One of the most enjoyable stalls at the show was the Amstrad Action stall. I found you to be some of the nicest people at the show.

My meeting with Bob and Pete was so good that I asked you to autograph mu copy of Amstrad Action. When I got home, I was so pleased at how well the mag was set out I decided to subscribe to it. What can I say, except brill. fab and it beats the pants off the other Amstrad mags available.

Robert Burns (remember the boy who had the nerve to write down the *Frank Bruno* codes?)
Stockton-on-Tees

How could we forget you, Robert? You even get a mention on the Ed Lines pages. I'm glad to hear that you came back and bought a copy, and even gladder that you liked it so much. Bob and I agree with you – we think we were some of the nicest people at the show too.



A cautionary tale

Unlike the majority of readers whose letters were published in AA 2, I did not rave about this new magazine straight away! I approached with caution, due to the fact that the cover was not the usual, straight-laced BASIC format.

After flicking through the new mag that was full of reviews I still remained unimpressed. However, when I finally parted company with a small £1 coin, I felt I had to read the whole magazine, as the articles were so varied/humorous/interesting.

The 'jumbled up' (pardon the expression) format of the magazine is so refreshing and makes compulsive reading.

Also, unlike many of the readers, I shall **not** cancel my support to CWTA as your magazine is so totally different and there is room for both of you on my bookshelf.

Also on the plus side, it is nice to see editorial comments after almost every letter instead of only one or two. Thanks for a bright new mag!

N Smith,
Burton-on-Trent

I don't think I will pardon that expression. Mr. Smith. 'Jumbled up', indeed! Pistols at dawn. Or would you prefer Amstrads at 50 paces?

Bitten by the bug

I would like to say first that as a complete beginner at computing I really do enjoy your mag. I am not a young man, being 54, but I have really been bitten by the bug. I have a 664 and of course, like your other 664 men I am a little disappointed to be dumped so quickly, having got my Arnold in July.

Having started getting the other two mags originally I was delighted when a completely new magazine called AA came out. I did not feel so left out. It was as if we were both starting out together on a new adventure.

Obviously, being new at this, it takes me hours to type listings in, and I would like your expert opinion. I seem to be getting very cynical about listings. It seems to me that it is a con trick to get people to buy cassettes or discs, because no matter how many times I type listings in, nine out of ten will not work because of one thing or another.

The point I am tryng to make is this. An expert programmer would not need to type somebody else's listing in, because he could probably make his own games up. So being an amateur at this I am lost when such things appear on the screeen like DIM ARRAY. I have the USER MANUAL but some of it is completely over my head. If you do start doing listings, please help the poor enthusiastic amateur by getting them correct as it is demoralising after six to eight hours at the keys for the program to crash on me, because I am much too new at computing to figure out the more subtle faults.

Once again, thanks for the thoughtful advice and information in your mag. I am sure you will get more praise for your efforts than brickbats such as you received from D. Butterworth.

Personally, if I did not like a magazine I would not buy it. I would certainly not show my ignorance by writing such tripe to you. You get 10 out of 10 from for publishing it because it took courage to let your readers see the other side of the coin. I appreciate that you and your team must work very hard to get this mag in the shops.

Gerald Earnshaw
Birchwood, Warrington

I can't help but agree with just about all the points you make Mr. Earnshaw. As you'll see from the listings we've printed in this issue, we're not going in for mammoth ten-part type-ins. We'll be sticking, on the whole, to short useful programs that will cut down the chances of error. We're glad you like the mag. We think it's something of an adventure too – although one that's had its nasty surprises over the last couple of months. Stick with us and see what happens.



Plain brown envelope

I completely disagree with David Butterworth of Hampshire, who sent in his letter of abuse. Admittedly, there were a few mistakes in Issue 1, but that was due to the rush to get the mag ready in time, as explained in Issue 2.

I was committed to another Amstrad magazine until your mag came on the scene. Can't you put more colour in the reviews? They don't lok too good in black and white.

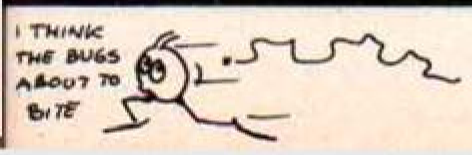
Also, would it be possible to put the magazines in plain brown envelopes, because when it is delivered, anybody can see what computer I own.

All my friends think my Amstrad is rubbish, but I know better. There may not be as many games out there for the Amstrad as gfor other machines but Locomotive Basic is by far the best and the Amstrad is better than other computers value-wise as well.

Gareth Knight,
Chorlton, Manchester

*Plain brown wrappers? This isn't a **dirty** mag you know, Gareth. Read your AA with pride!*

10



Battery fraud

While having a free read in the local WHS I saw this eye and the word Amstrad. A swift scan revealed no programme listings, so naturally I bought it. I hate typing for days, then waiting a month for corrections. In one case I had to send a stamped addressed envelope.

Being an adventurer your subscription offer misses me by a mile, unless you offer equivalent adventure software, which might tempt me – there's £3.50 at stake here. I already have two magazines a month, so I shall buy yours for 6 months, when it could take the place of one of them, or not. First impressions are good, but I'm a loyal sort of chap so you've got your work cut out.

Plus my wife is getting suspicious about the number and expense of the "batteries" essential for working Arnold, and has more than once commented how like audio tapes they are. I'm not sure how long I can keep it up.

So you can see, £3 a month for those old books, plus God knows how much for "batteries"; could cause a certain coolness. The bathroom hasn't been decorated for years.

John W Birch
London N15

You'd better hide this copy of the magazine Mr.Birch. If your wife reads it she'll find out that they aren't batteries at all. What colour are you going to do the bathroom?



Lamentation

I am an owner of a CPC664 which I bought about 2 months ago. After I read a review on the CPC6128 that came out , I was absolutely furious for wasting my "money" which is hard to get nowadays on a CPC664. So I wrote to the Amstrad User club and humbly asked if I could trade in my CPC664 for a CPC6128, but they were not very helpful , with a feeble excuse saying that their company had been damaged due to past promises made, concerning launch and delivery dated of products , and that under the circumstances therefore, they propose no action to be taken.

In my opinion it has been the people who bought the CPC664 that have been "damaged" and someone should do something about it! But who?

Alastair Lam
Belfast

Yours is a common problem that looks as if it can be solved only by getting one of the commercial upgrades now coming on to the market. But I can see you're still going to be sore.

Hoot for Toot

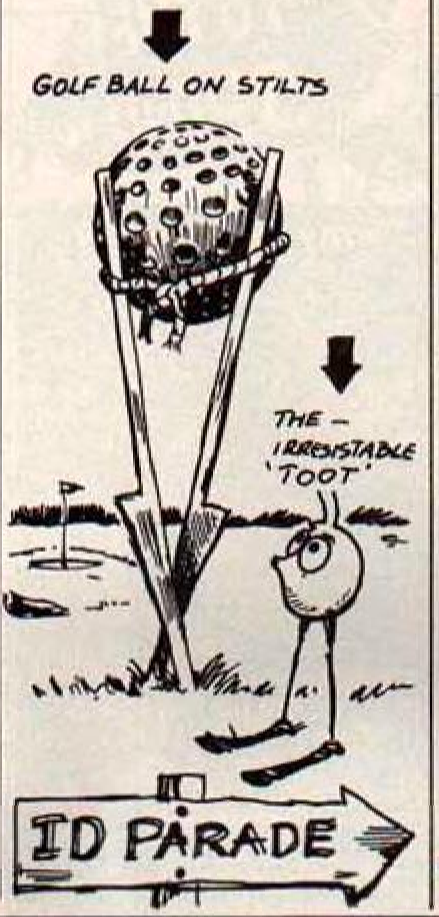
I first noticed Amstrad Action in a jumble sale at my local tip. After tearing off the front cover and admiring the picture of Bob Wade on page 3 I thought what a great mag Amstrad Action was going to be.

After reading it through 102 times I decided to put pen to paper and send you a note (C minor).

At last a 'non-boffin' Amstrad mag. However, speaking on behalf of all the other Action readers (both of them) I would like to see a regular cartoon strip featuring that moronic-golfball-on-stilts-thing Toot.

Andrew Bowden
Loughborough

Lots of things are planned for Toot, Andrew – not all of them pleasant. But a cartoon strip is a possibility.



Cut price?

When are software houses going to realise the full potential of the CPC 464? It has far better graphics than the Spectrum and yet we get dumped with revamped Golden Oldies of yesteryear. Often just straight conversions at higher prices! I mean, £8.95 – or even £11.95 – for a game seems to me ridiculous when the average schoolkid gets about two quid a week. That makes five weeks' pocket money. And they expect kids not to copy their friends' games. Who are they kidding!

So come on software houses – reduce those prices! After all, it's the kids who buy most of the games...isn't it?

Aaron Byers
Scotland

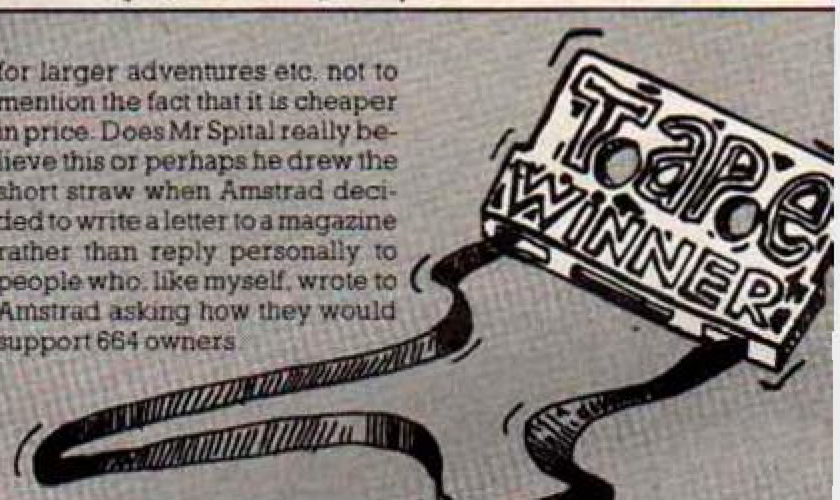
I'd be very surprised if it was the kids who buy most of the games. I suspect that Mum and Dad often have to fork out. And I doubt if we'll see software houses reducing prices as long as people go on buying them for £8.95 or more. But pretty soon we should start getting games developed on the Amstrad at the same time as, if not before, other machines.

664 demise

I have just read a letter by Ivor Spital, Laboratory Manager of Amstrad Consumer Electronics, who writes "I don't know what all the fuss is about!" which only further demonstrates the total lack of regard which Amstrad has shown to those who purchased a CPC664.

Did Alan Sugar really show any concern for 664 owners when, rather than just announce a new machine was replacing the 664, he says "It is well and truly dead"? A Bit like Amstrad's customer relations policy perhaps? This was hardly a statement designed to make owners proud of their machines. Incidentally, was it before or after this announcement that the advertisement claiming Amstrad owners became happier was designed?

Mr Spital's letter goes on to indicate that he cannot understand why people who bought a 664 should be upset by the fact that within a few months, or less than five weeks in my case, Amstrad have replaced it with a machine with an extra 64K of memory, a more comfortable keyboard (according to your article), a CP/M operating system which gives access to a greater range of software, possibilities for larger adventures etc. not to mention the fact that it is cheaper in price. Does Mr Spital really believe this or perhaps he drew the short straw when Amstrad decided to write a letter to a magazine rather than reply personally to people who, like myself, wrote to Amstrad asking how they would support 664 owners.



I wonder how many people bought a 664 after reading in a magazine, which by the way did not bear the message "NOT an official Amstrad publication" on the cover, that no new machine would be available in this country until next year and although Amstrad says that it did not decide to release the CPC6128 until less than a month before it appeared. Isn't it strange that when asked about dealers left with CPC 664s on their hands a company spokesman was able to say "We honestly believe there is very little out there"... I wonder why?

As a genuinely independent magazine you would appear to be in an ideal position to help those who feel aggrieved at a short life of their computer and the apparent indifference of the manufacturer.

C Plant
Knosall, Stafford

You're not alone in feeling strongly about this matter Mr Plant. Amstrad seem to have acted insensitively, to say the least. But they've never made any bones about the fact that they're in business, and that in business it's profits that count. Unfortunately, there's little that anyone including ourselves, can do – except give a platform for your views. Perhaps Mr Spital would like to reply?

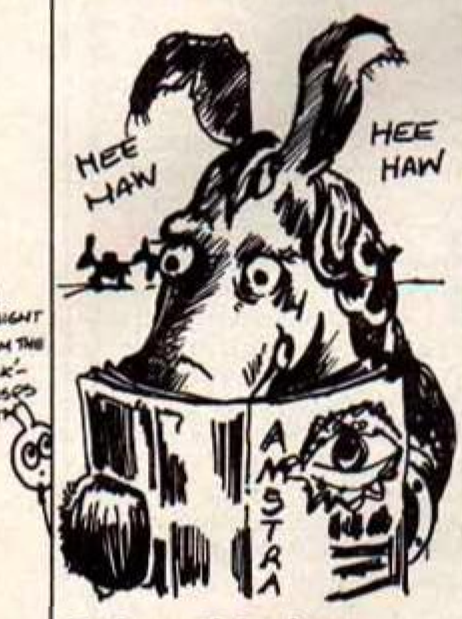


A good read

I recently bought the first issue of *Amstrad Action*. What a shock I received when I ventured into the pages of text! It's the most interesting magazine I've ever read about Amstrad.

I found it interesting because it seemed to be written in a more down-to-earth style, unlike other magazines. I was so interested in its contents that I could not put it down until I'd read it all. In fact, it was the first magazine I'd read completely in years.

Caroline Carpenter
Weston-super-Mare



Delayed Action

What happened? Did the pack horse lose a shoe on the M5? Did you have to call in the RAC (Rescue Amstrad Couriers)? On September 12th I scoured the newsagents to find the new Arnold mag I had seen advertised in the official publication. I was disappointed to find no trace of it anywhere. Never mind, I thought, I'll try again tomorrow. Again no luck. Finally on September 18th I discovered one copy in a small backstreet newsagents, hidden behind *Women's Weekly*. I hope I shall not have to go through this procedure every month, (although it was well worth the trouble). I would take out a subscription, but I just spent my last ten quid on *Shadowfire* and *Spy v Spy*.

With the £1 I paid for the first issue you should be able to afford a carrot and stick to increase the efficiency of your distribution service.

David Baron
Blackburn, Lancs

You have to understand, David, that it's not easy to get reliable pack-horses these days and that they require more inducement than a carrot. However, we'll soon have enough money to use motor transport so you should get future copies of the mag much more quickly.

Problems, problems

Oh dear, Oh dear. Now here's a right dilemma. Had a VIC 20 for three years – sold it (cheap) to upgrade to CPC464 (at great expense) – have had that for one year.

I start to get interested in expanding my lovely machine (actually have learned more about programming in this one year than 3 with VIC) by adding a disk drive and a printer when into the starting gate comes big brother 664. Just as I alter my calculations, Sugar turns nasty and invents 2 more machines!! and kills off big brother.

Problem: Do I continue my plan and con, (er) convince the wife to cough up £500? for disk drive and printer for Arnold or fork out £456 for Joyce (nice change that, buying a bird instead of a fella) or do I buy the 6128 and a printer. To complicate matters further, I glimpse a scrap of news that a new Amstrad printer is on its way for £159 (news not in your mag by the by!)

Now do I program Arthur to work this lot out or shall I drive the Bank Manager daft?

By the way congrats on your new mag, the 1st issue is lively and interesting (pity about the mis-prints and spelling). Keep up the good work and I might subscribe!!

M A Skinner
Burton on Trent

I always believe in driving the Bank Manager daft. I'm just glad I don't have his – or your – problems. The new Amstrad printer is covered in our add-ons feature.



Originality sin

First: my congrats on your mag – after reading issue two, it was clear that your mag must be one of the longest reads available.

Anyway – to my main point. I myself own a Spectrum – but before you get angry and throw my letter away, let me say I also use my dad's 464, and find it an infinitely more likeable, as well as (obviously) a superior machine – it has definitely set the standard as far as price and quality are concerned, and should enjoy a healthy and (hopefully) lengthy existence. But I digress – enough of the apologies and on with the letter.

My main point is that as a Spectrun/Amstrad user, it is extremely frustrating as well as saddening to see that nine out of ten hit Amstrad games are conversions from the Spectrum/64. OK, so the programs benefit enormously from the conversion, eg *Alien 8*, *Way of the Exploding Fist* etc, but for me, as a Spectrun owner it is disconcerting when looking for a good Amstrad game, to find that I already own the Spectrum version anyway. Even *Sorcery* was once a Speccie game, you know! I'm not trying to give the impression that the Spectrum software scene is superior to that of the Amstrad – and I hope that my comments won't be taken as such, but I do think that programming talent could be put to more original and productive use.

Alexander
Hampton, Middlesex

Sorcery may have started on the Spectrum, but what about *Sorcery Plus? Pretty soon now I think we'll start to see some truly original games on the Amstrad.*

Rustic reader

You say somewhere in this mag (issue 1) that you live somewhere miles in the country at some rustic address! – I too live miles from nowhere. I teach and live in a residential special school some 10 miles from the nearest town.

Because of duties and distance, I can only make it into town once a week, on Saturdays and my first port of call is the newsagent (Martins) – I was there last Saturday – same old mags – I called in today and there was AA!

The point I am trying to make is that at the end of your questions you say that there is a free draw, but that entries must be received before the end of September.

If that is the case, then in this neck of the woods the mag was not out until October!

I suspect that the September date is just anothere prontos irror for which AA is already famouse (cf page nos on the cover and one on p.98...''If you think section f is next then you should write 2h, and so on''

Having said all that please find my subscription enclosed.

How about a comp to find all the misprints in Issue 1? - Like on p52, just below the title *Sorcery Plus!* Who or what is a ''+irgin''?

M.F.Hatton
Morpeth, Northumberland

Thonkyou for the litter Mr Hottan. Their arent so many irrors in issues 2 and 3, is there? We use cumputer tyesetting so there is no room for hisprints. You are still in time for the grate publishers draw.

Tragi-comedy

The Comedy of Errors in respect of the Amstrad User Show continues. At least it *would* be a comedy but for the fact that it seems I am to be out of pocket for the second time because of it.

Computing with the Amstrad in the March issue advertised a user show as part of British Electronics Week at Olympia on 30th April. I went. It cost me a great deal of money to discover that either it didn't come off, or it was a figment of someone's imagination. When I got there – nothing!

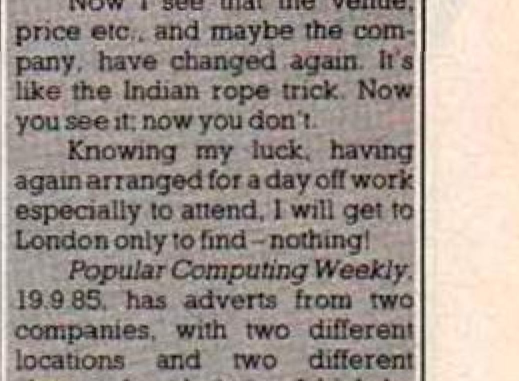
This time, following the extensive advertising, I sent off £4 for two advance tickets, which I received very promptly. They are, however, now useless, as the company has sold it to another company. I understand that the money will be refunded, but it is strange that the telephone of Computer Marketplace is always engaged, even at 9 p.m. on Friday evenings. I have written to them too. Makes you wonder if their letter-box is out of order as well.

Now I see that the venue, price etc., and maybe the company, have changed again. It's like the Indian rope trick. Now you see it; now you don't.

Knowing my luck, having again arranged for a day off work especially to attend, I will get to London only to find – nothing!

Popular Computing Weekly, 19.9.85, has adverts from two companies, with two different locations and two different charges for admission. I think the author must be Hans Christian Andersen or someone.

D.J.Simmons
Shoreham, Sussex





Commodore owner!!!

I know you are probably being swamped by letters of praise and thanks. Well, I would like to add mine to this swamp of letters. Your magazine is great. You'll probably hate me for this, but I own a Commodore 64 and I'm proud of it. I hope to get an Amstrad soon and I'm proud of that too!

There is one thing I would like to see in AA - a page of Toot's adventures. I have enclosed two ideas for you. Before I go, unlike most magazines, please don't make controversial comments about other machines.

Keep up the good work.

Nicholas Coles
Alresford, Hampshire

We don't hate anybody Nicholas and we certainly won't be going in for disparaging comments about other machines. Even if they aren't as good as the Amstrad. We liked your cartoons so much we've displayed them for all to see on the Ed-Lines pages.



Tape trouble

I would like to see some practical articles about converting tape-based software to 3 inch disks. I have a CPC664 with a colour monitor and I am finding it hard to use anything but tapes.

I have bought a utility called *Idle Meddler* to help me do this but it does not relocate code that will overwrite the disk drive interface. Also some 100% machine code programs that I can get onto disk using this utility such as *Knight Lore* and *Dundarach* I cannot then run from disk - it just loads the header and stops.

Another problem I have encountered with a lot of tape-based software is just getting the programs to run on my 664. I have copied a routine from another magazine which supposedly 'converts' my machine to run like a 464. This works OK with some programs but doesn't make any difference to most. Some of the Amsoft programs are the worst offenders.

Penultimately a little moan about AMSTRAD. When I bought my 664 I paid the full price £450.00 thinking it was the best buy on the market at the time (which it was). Four weeks later along comes the CPC6128. I don't mind so much about the machine, but the £50 price difference is a bit upsetting. Also when I unpacked the manual there was a card from AMSTRAD asking me to send in details of the machine giving my name and address. It said 'you won't be sorry, we will send you lots of free information.' Well I'm not sorry, but I haven't heard a peep from AMSTRAD!!!

Finally I would like to congratulate you on a very interesting magazine for which I have already placed a regular order with my newsagent.

Ken Swain
Preston

There are a number of tape to disc utilities on the market - at least one of them ought to do the job. We hope to run something on them in a forthcoming issue. There certainly doesn't seem much point in having disc facilities if you can't get your software on it. As for the 6128 launch - well, the closer to it you bought your 664, the more annoyed you're entitled to be. But see Amscene for details of some interesting peripherals which might allow you to upgrade to Big Brother standards.

Helpline plea

First of all, thank you for an excellent magazine. The method of classifying Software is really first class - The best I have seen in any mag. I would, however like to see your regular mail order price included in the reviews so that a basis can be formed for calculating discounts.

Secondly, the other two mags have enough games listings. I have already realised, after only 8 months of owning a computer, that basic games are not racing in comparison with commercial software. It's true that some interesting subroutines are included in games listings, but I value utility listings more highly.

My third remark is that an adventure helpline would be most appreciated. I am happy to see hardware reviews - and would like to see one of the new Amstrad Printer, as I am thinking of buying one.

Mr William Jenkins
Cramlington, Northumberland

Midnight oil

After reading your review of *Lords of Midnight* (October) I purchased a copy and, after carefully reading the entire instruction novel (whew!) prepared myself for a fun few hours. After having placed my characters in strategic positions and acquiring a formidable hoard of "free" as a following, I discovered (at 3am!) that there is simply NO way to save the game by following the instructions. It was either leave my 464 on all night (thereby guaranteeing two days of aggro from my wife about fire hazards) or abandon the game. Anything for a quiet life so the Lords were terminated by the off switch while Doomdark chortled in the distance. I stumbled off to bed wondering if Amsoft were really a Doomdark minion in disguise.

The save instructions given are deceitfully simple. Press "S", throw in a blank cassette, press "Record", and "Play", and hit "Enter". Then the fun begins! After a short while the screen displays the message "verifying game". Fair enough, that's what it's supposed to do. But the tape kept going...and going...and going..., and eventually used up one side of a C-60 with no end in sight. And once you have entered the "save" option there is no way to get back into the game again. In one evening I lost my patience, a lot of sleep, and the game I'd taken 4 hours to get into an advantageous position.

Next day I called the *Midnight* expert at Amsoft. Says he, "When the verifying game" message comes on the screeen you have to stop the tape, rewind, press play and let the machine read it again and, WITH ANY LUCK (?!!!) you will get an OK message." Silly me! How could I have missed that little tit-bit in the instructions? Easy...It isn't in there. Not a mention!

I agree that *Lords* is a remarkable game, but unless you have the endurance and spare time of a flagpole sitter, an easier and well-defined "save" option is a crucial necessity. Also there should be some way of re-entering the game if you push the "S" accidentally (which can easily be done if you are excited and want to move a character "South".) As it stands now you have no option but to try and save it and, unless you've spoken to Amsoft lately, you can't.

I think my observation would have to be come on Amsoft... don't spoil a Saville Row suit by using a plastic zipper.

M. Girouard
Tadworth, Surrey



Amsoft aversion

Hello, Welcome and What Kept You!

At last a choice of independent magazines. I have been waiting for you.

Congrats now dealt with, I must express a hope that the AA team will be doing something other than reviews in future. The methods used are good and the games that I know are fairly accurately covered. BUT, please don't do as all the other publications do, ie. if a game is bad, say so. If it costs an advertiser at least you know that only quality products are advertised in your mag. After all if you don't do this you can't truly call yourselves INDEPENDENT can you!

But to repeat the two main points mentioned,

Keep listings in large bold type, this keeps down eye strain and reduces mistakes.

Keep us informed on Radio and TV broadcasts on computing in general and Amstrad Computing in particular.

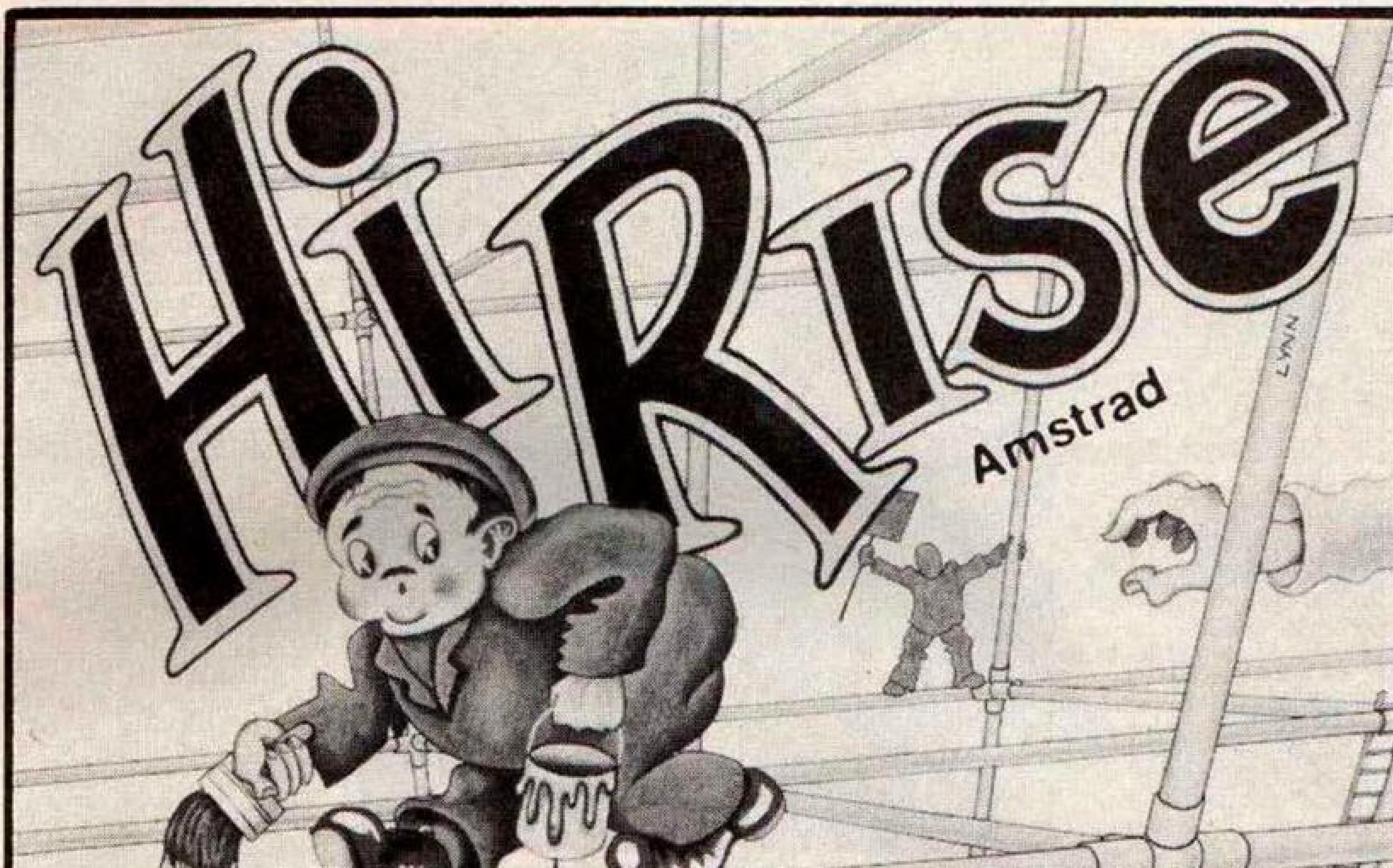
Re the interview with Peter Roback and Mike Mordecai of Amsoft, in the first issue of Amstrad Action. The Amstrad computer is a first class machine, which regardless of which model you purchase, you can be confident that you have a first class computer. But, Amsoft have alienated themselves from the users by releasing third rate games at top prices.

I realise that they had to get software back-up for the machine as quickly as possible and that meant pushing out anything that came their way. BUT was it necessary to price everything at £8.95?

They may have made a quick profit BUT, I will never purchase another item of software with the Amsoft label on it as there are too many rip off merchants in this business and they should not be allowed to get away with it.

How many other Amstrad users out there agree with me? Let us all stand up and demand, if not quality, at least value for money!

Peter Ravenscroft
Bath



Other new title – WIZARD'S LAIR for
Commodore 64, Amstrad and Spectrum

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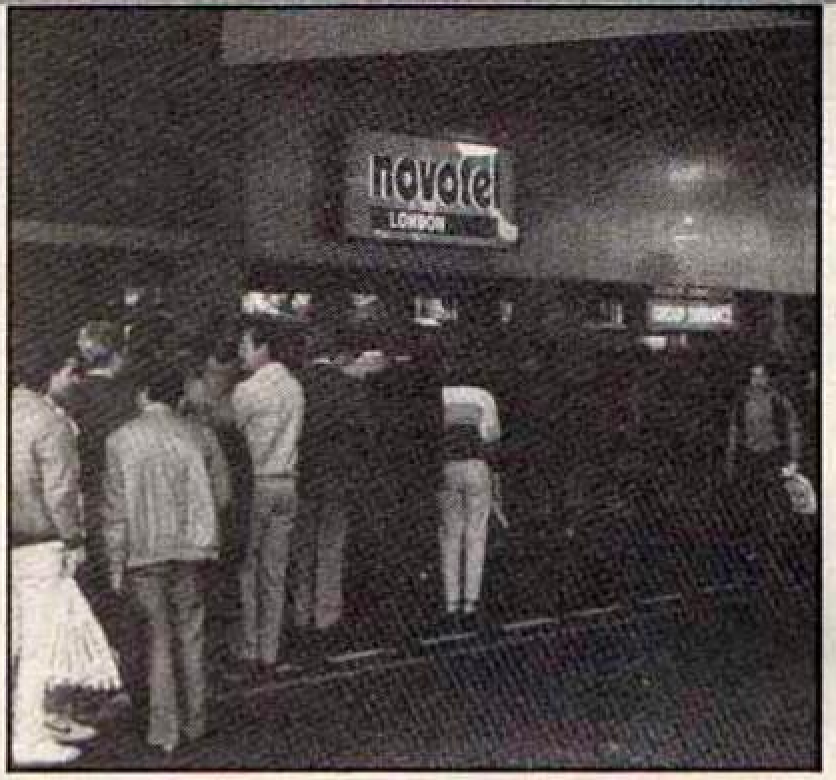
PACKED OUT!

Amstrad show pulls the crowds

Energy! Excitement! Exhaustion! The first Amstrad computer show at London's Novotel certainly lived up to its billing. The throngs of people scouring the stands and scooping up carrier bags full of goodies seemed to prove beyond doubt that whatever is happening elsewhere in home computers, the Amstrad scene is HUMMING.

From our location perched behind rapidly shrinking piles of magazines, the overwhelming impression was that of the raw excitement of the big home computer shows of a couple years back. Two things seemed to surprise everyone: the age of the people coming in (Amstrad owners are clearly a far more mature, sophisticated lot than the kiddy-dominated Commodore and Spectrum markets) and the amount of money they were spending (a lot).

One possible flaw in the proceedings had been removed earlier in the week when the organisers of a rival Amstrad show gave up a losing battle and dropped their plans. Even so, the Novotel exhibition seemed at first a bit thin on the ground, especially as far as games software was concerned. Most of the big software houses – Ocean, Ultimate, Melbourne House, US Gold – stayed away. Even Amstrad themselves, perhaps worried at the possibility the thing might flop, were only represented by



their magazine Amstrad Computer User.

But by noon on the first day it was clear it was the absentees who were the losers as exhibitors all over the hall reported huge interest and sales well above expectations.

Of the new products being launched, perhaps the biggest stir was caused on the DK'tronics stand. Two major new add-ons were announced. The first is being sold under the powerful, if slightly optimistic, slogan 'Convert your 464 into a 6128'. It offers a 64K memory expansion giving the same amount and configuration of RAM as in the new 6128 (although it doesn't follow that all 6128 software can be run on it – there are still differences). Also included in the £49.95 price is a program (on cassette) offering 12 new Basic commands to allow easy use of the new memory bank.

The other hot new DK'tronics launch is of a 256K 'Silicon Disk'. This is basically a set of RAM chips configured to act as a second disk drive. The advantage over normal drives is extra speed – and the cost is just £99.95. We hope to review both these add-ons next issue.

Other add-ons creating a stir were the various graphics packages on show. These included the AMX Mouse, various Light Pens and an interesting piece of technical drawing software, *Draughtsman* from EG Computer Graphics.

The telecoms revolution was represented by several interface and modem manufacturers, including KDS, Skywave and Honeysoft.

Meanwhile on the games side, Vortex seemed to be creating the greatest stir. As well as selling the superb *Highway Encounter* in considerable numbers, they were also running an early demo version of *TLL*, a piloting game in which you fly around a scrolling 3D landscape. It was the speed and smoothness of the scrolling which raised a lot of eyebrows. We eagerly await a finished copy.

Also showing new software were Micropower with a pre-production version of *Dr Who*, Taskset with *Souls of Darkon* and PSS with demos of their new wargames, *Theatre Europe* and *Battle of Britain*. Meanwhile we on the AA stand sold a lot of magazines and made a lot of friends. Our thanks to everyone who stopped by.

Lord of the wrestling rings

Melbourne House are planning a hot Australian Christmas for Amstrad owners with the release of no less than five new titles. Topping the list is the long-awaited *Lord of the Rings (game 1)*, the follow up to *The Hobbit*. It's to be sold for £15.50 in a package which also contains a copy of the first part of Tolkein's trilogy on which the game is based.

The company say there is far greater interaction than in *The Hobbit*, and that the program's vocabulary exceeds 800 words. 'We expect it to be the biggest selling adventure this Christmas,' says Melbourne's Paula Byrne.

The title she expects to be the biggest selling *arcade* game is an action-packed wrestling game from the programming team who did *Exploding Fist*. 'It's going to be better than *Fist*,' said Paula. 'The animation's amazing.'

Another big follow up title is *Mugsy's Revenge*. *Mugsy* was never released on Amstrad, but it caused quite a stir with its remarkably detailed graphics and unusual (if rather limited) gameplay set in pre-war Chicago, Mafia country.

The other two titles are *Gyroscope*, a difficult arcade game inw hich you try to control a spinning wheel over a strange, grid-based landscape, and *Wham – The Jukebox*, which teeny-boppers everywhere will love because it includes six Wham songs and allows you to create your own tunes to boot.

Hello, hello ANOTHER show

If you missed out on October's Amstrad show in London, you'll be glad to know there's another chance to get an eyeful of the latest widgets and software for your machine. A second show is being held in January, again at London's Novotel Exhibition Centre in Hammersmith.

The organisers, Database Publications, say it will be even bigger than the first show with over 100 exhibitors present (including Amstrad Action). It's being held on Saturday and Sunday, January 11 and 12. Ring 061-480-0171 for details.

Subscription games

Here's the latest news of the games being offered in our knockout Christmas subscription offer (see p104). *Beach Head* has of course been available for some time. *Raid*, *Bounty Bob* and *Bruce Lee*, while not actually out at time of writing, seem certain to have been released by the first week of November. *Impossible Mission* is due for release on November 8th, and US Gold do not expect it to be significantly delayed. That leaves just *Dambusters* which is unlikely to be out before the end of November.

So the way things look now, if you order anything expect *Dambusters* you can expect your games within a week to 10 days. Going for *Dambusters* will probably mean a delay until December.

We are also, at time of writing (late October), still awaiting the release of Imagine's *Hypersports* and Beyond's *Spy v Spy*. Humble apologies to anyone still waiting for these. We haven't forgotten you.



AMSTRAD ACTION HOT 20

Our second chart of the current top-selling Amstrad titles shows several games still doing very well af er some time at hte top. *Fist* stays at number 1, and looks set to keep ahead of the opposition until after Christmas.

Mastertronic maintain their strong presence with four budget games in the top ten. The news has got around that Mastertronic are producing some of the best value software there is.

Our last month's Mastergame, *Highway Encounter*, is in with a bullet at 11 and wi8ll surely make progress towards the top. *Code Name Mat 2* is another new entry, while *Dun Darach* has slipped out of the reckoning – but Gargoyle will surely be back with *Marsport*. The only adventure in the Hot 20 is still Level 9's *Red Moon*.

The chart was compiled by polling giants Gallup and covers the four weeks up to October 18th. For YOUR favourite games, see the charts in Hot Stuff.

1. **THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST** Melbourne House
2. **FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING** Elite
3. **NONTERAQUEOUS** Mastertronic
4. **FINDERS KEEPERS** Mastertronic
5. **CHILLER** Mastertronic
6. **STARION** Melbourne House
7. **BEACH-HEAD** US Gold
8. **SCRABBLE** Leisure Genius
9. **LOCOMOTION** Mastertronic
10. **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
11. **HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER** Vortex
12. **DRAGONTORC** Hewson
13. **AIRWOLF** Elite
14. **CODE NAME MAT 2** Domark
15. **ALIEN 8** Ultimate
16. **DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON** Ocean
17. **BRIAN JACKS SUPERSTAR CHALLENGE** Martech
18. **PROJECT FUTURE** Gremlin Graphics
19. **RED MOON** Level 9
20. **SHORT'S FUSE** Firebird

Who needs a spelling chekker?

Tasman Software have produced an important new piece of software for owners of their Tasword 464D and 6128 word-processors – it's a spelling checker which is supplied complete with an impressively large dictionary of 25,000 words. You can run your files through the program and it'll spot any words in them it doesn't recognise. You are then offered the choice of correcting the word, or, if it is spelt correctly, adding it to the dictionary.

Tas-Spell is only available on disk and will set you back £16.50.

BEYOND

Beyond, Firebird – Firebird, Beyond

Industry watchers will be interested to note that Beyond Software has been bought up British Telecom and will now operate as a sister (but still 'independent') software house to Firebird. Beyond's previous owners were the publishing group EMAP (the people who do Sinclair User and Commodore User).

Judging from their comments on the sale, EMAP appear to have concluded that both owning a software house and publishing magazines which review that software house's products represented a conflict of interest. What a good thing nothing like that happens in the Amstrad magazine scene.

MASTERING THE 6128

Another excuse for buying an Amstrad 6128 has been provided by Campbell Software Design, the software house whose database and spreadsheet programs have been widely acknowledged as the best available for the 464 and 664. Campbell have just released new versions of *Masterfile* and *Mastercalc* which make full use of the 6128's extra memory.

This means that *Masterfile* can now hold roughly 1000 names and addresses (up from 500), while the maximum size of spreadsheet in *Mastercalc* is up from the already impressive 3000 cells to 7000. The fact that bank switching is required to make use of the extra memory means that data searches on *Masterfile* are now significantly slower, but at least the program will keep you informed as to how far it's progressed in the search. There are a number of other new features. On *Mastercalc* the use of formulae is now a lot more flexible and powerful, and certain conditional functions can be performed. Both programs also have included the 'software extensions' that Campbell have previous sold separately. These allow data from the programs to be used elsewhere, for example in the popular word-processor *Tasword*. So you could have information from your database automatically merged into letters you write.

The two programs are available direct from Campbell Software Design at£34.90 each.

SUGAR HITS THE JACKPOT

Another indication of Amstrad's incredible success in the home computer industry has come with the publication of figures showing record profits for the year ending June 1985. At a time when Sinclair, Acorn and Commodore have been experiencing enormous difficulties, new boys Amstrad made just over £20m pre-tax – more than double the previous year's amount.

The gain is due almost entirely to sales of computers, software and peripherals which in a single year have risen from nothing to two-thirds of Amstrad's total turnover. Interestingly, more than half of these sales were abroad – if you didn't know, Amstrads are currently the hottest computers in many European countries.

It's all very good news for one Alan M Sugar, Amstrad's chairman (hence the company name – AMSTRADing). He owns



just over 50 per cent of the company's shares, making him a good deal richer than most people who start work as a street trader. In a statement accompanying the figures he puts down his success in the micro market to the ability to supply the goods which people really want.

In a barbed comment which seems to be aimed at Sinclair he says: 'One of our talents is to engineer products with all the specifications and facilities the market demands and delete those only enjoyed by the minority. In short we produce what the mass market consumer wants and not a "boffins ego trip".'

He also has a sharp comment for those who consider the home computer market to be in decline. 'I must firmly disagree with these reports. It is true that certain types of low cost computers have seen their peak, but serious home computing and personal office use is here to stay. We are firmly in this business, and we intend to remain in it.'



Shogun slow down



Virgin's long-awaited oriental strategy game will have to wait a little longer – it's not due now until early 1986.

It sounds worth waiting for though. It's a strategy game in which you have to work your way up from the lowly status of peasant to become the mighty Shogun, Japan's warlord master. Before you make it you'll have to slaughter a large number of rivals.

Shogun is an icon-driven program, so there's no text entry at all. It takes place against what Virgin describe as a 'beautiful landscape' while you control the animated figures.

Hacker's Pride and joy

Anyone with a disk drive could be interested in the latest program from Pride Utilities, makers of the best-selling *Transmat* utility. *Oddjob* offers a range of utilities for disk users including the ability to read individual sectors of a disk, and a command to unerase a file accidentally deleted from the directory.

Also included are alternatives to the CP/M commands DISCCOPY and FORMAT, offering greater speed and flexibility. For more details ring Pride on 0582-411686.

Drawing on Draughtsman

One interesting-looking program launched at the Amstrad show was a drawing utility, *Draughtsman*, from a small company called Computer Graphics. Unlike the recent rash of programs using light-pens or mice to control a cursor, this one simply uses joystick or cursor keys.

However it offers a constant readout of the x-y coordinates of the cursor and various other pieces of information which could be particularly helpful in producing technical drawings or diagrams.

Gremlin's gremlins

Gremlin seem to have ironed out the bugs that were holding up the release of *Metabolis* and *Monty on the Run*. Both programs should now be available in early November. *Wanted Monty Mole* has, however, been held back until early December.

Also due for release in December is *Profanation*, a platform game written in Spain, in which you play an intrepid explorer trapped in the Temple of Abu Simbel. Gremlin's Ian Stewart promises it wil be very difficult and 'very different'.

For release in the new year Gremlin have games based on the role-playing books *The Way of the Tiger*. The first of the programs will be in four parts mixing fighting and strategy, and starring the Ninja warrior Avenger.

All the games will cost £8.95 on cassette or £12.95 on disc.

Expert systems

The first in Hisoft's projected series of 'expert systems' software is a program which should appeal to anyone worrying about the spread of their waistline or the rate of their pulse. It's called *Your Health* and has been written in collaboration with a nutritionist to bring you advice about the state of your health generally and your diet in particular. Hisoft do not claim that it will replace the family doctor.

Coming next in the series are *Your Horoscope* and *Your Hand Revealed*. Hisoft say these programs are a foretaste of some much more serious expert systems to come in future months. The present ones will cost £8.95 on cassette.

Calling all wordsmiths

Here's a nice little package for anyone who needs to produce text for type-setting. For £595 you can buy the complete Amstrad PCW 8256 system together with the word-processor *Wordstar* and a special piece of software called *Typefit*. This latter shows on screen a simulation of what will happen to your text when it is typeset – it uses the type-face, size and column width you've selected to work out where lines will be split and therefore how many lines the finished work will be.

The package, called TypeWriter, is being sold by Wordsmiths Typesetting, the people who set this magazine by the by. They offer a facility to type-set directly from *Wordstar* text files on disks supplied by customers, allowing finished work to be produced within a couple of hours.

For more info contact Tom Graves or Mike Mepham on 0458-45359.

Keeping an account

People using their computers as business machines will be pleased by the rapidly increasing number of accounting packages hitting the market. Perhaps the most significant is the Sagesoft *Accounts* program, one which has been enormously successful on other micros. Although it'll set you back £100 less a penny, it offers a fully integrated system for sales and purchase ledgers, and VAT analysis. More details on 091-284 7077.

Also heavily involved in the business scene are Gemini Software (Tel. 0395-265165) with a suite of programs covering cashbook accounting, VAT and database applications. Two other new pieces of software offering financial management are *Money Manager* from Connect Systems (01-743 9792), and *Cashbook* from Micro-Aid (0209-831274).

If keeping a track of your employee's wage bill is more your problem, you could look out *Amstrad Payroll* from Micro-Aid or *Payroll* from Sagesoft.

We hope to run reviews of most of these packages in the next issue.



Woes of Yesod

Odin Computer Graphics have had to delay the release of the already-advertised *Nodes of Yesod* because of the departure of the programmer working on the Amstrad conversion. It now seems touch and go whether the game will be out before Christmas.

ALL THEY WANT FOR CHR

Is a printer and a modem and a disc drive and a joystick and a...We take a look around the add-ons and plug-ins to come up with a few things the Arnolds might like to see in their stockings on Xmas morning.

JY-2 joystick
Amstrad, £14.95

This may not be the best joystick on the market but it has one glaringly obvious advantage in that you can plug another joystick into it. As yet it isn't an industry standard though and the games that cater for the two joystick option tend to come only from Amsoft themselves.

It's still a good joystick, though, with suction cups on the base to hold it down firmly. The handle is slightly contoured and the two stick fire buttons allow trigger finger or thumb firing. There is no base fire button. The stick is very much in the Quickshot mould and provides a similar feel with its click action.



DKtronics 64K and 256K RAMS
DKtronics, £49.95 and £99.95

The first of these two add-ons turns the humble 464 into a '6128' able to run CP/M+ programs. Just plug it in to the expansion port. The 256K expansion does the same, but with an extra 192K of memory on top. It doesn't *quite* add up to a full-blown 6128 because of differences in the firmware and Basic Roms. But with all that extra memory, who's worrying?

For those who are interested there are 12 extra Basic commands provided and the extra memory is accessed by 'bank switching'. The switching is done using a single I/O port using 16K sub-blocks and the unit comes with software which will control this. You can control the switching without the software though, if you want to get to grips with that sort of thing.

The 256K expansion offers a further three blocks of 64K RAM and as with the smaller module these can be used for storing screens, windows, graphics and Basic arrays leaving the resident memory in the 464 free to cope with bigger Basic programs.

One handy feature is that when the RAM is used for machine code it will retain this even if the computer is reset or more crashes at an inconvenient moment.

All this makes for a much more powerful computer able to tackle the most complex business programs, but still able to play every game you can buy for Amstrad computers.



464

The Electric Studio Light Pen
The Electric Studio, £19.95 cass software, £26.95 disk software

This handy little number was reviewed in issue one but improvements have been made on the already excellent pre-production package we had to make it the best value pen available.

It's got a string of graphics features as long as an executive's lunch break. The ways in which it now differs from our review copy are all plusses – an improved spraycan, a throughbus for using with a disk drive and most importantly the necessary information for using it in your own programs. In fact they've eliminated two of the three bad points from our review to make it an excellent buy.

The package comes on disc for big brother 664 as well and has two alternative options for colour and green screen monitors. The mass of geometric functions, drawing facilities and screen handling features make it possible to create marvellous pictures and designs.

There are lots of special functions like Bezier simulations, mirror drawing, flipping images, zoom, 3D boxes and triangles, ellipses and grid backgrounds. These are all presented in a single on-screen menu and explained in the manual which also tells you how to use the pen and screen designs in your own programs.



DDI-1 Disc Drive
Amstrad, £159.95

This invaluable bit of hardware opens up whole new vistas for me – fast loading, CP/M programs, massive games like *Sorcery +* and all the new disk software that is coming through.

It's certainly an expensive purchase but when you consider that the market is becoming more and more disc oriented all the time, it's well worth it. The fact that it allows you to run CP/M makes a whole new range of business and utility programs available and in the near future bigger, better games.

The range of disc programs is already large and with Amstrad committed to increasing it things look rosy. No more waiting 20 minutes for a game to load – you can have it up and running in under 20 seconds.

The drive will also help in your own programming, making loading and saving a lot easier with debugging and editing being much less time consuming. You can also learn how to use Logo, which is explained in the drive manual in some detail.

 Xmas is a time for

ISTMAS Special

Prestel Link
Cirkit, £29.99

This has got to be the cheapest way of getting hooked up to Prestel and entering the booming world of telecommunications on your micro. For just 30 quid you get a BT-approved modem, interface and the software you need. That's amazing value – something to do with the fact that it's been bought up from a company who are no longer trading.

Of course there are certain limitations. The modem is of the acoustic type – you dial up on your own phone and then press the handset into contact with the modem, a method which does not always ensure reliable data transfer and will only work with standard-shaped phones. It's powered by four AA batteries, which at least means you don't have an extra mains lead to worry about. A wire from the modem connects to the interface which plugs into your micro's expansion port and is claimed to be compatible with 464, 664 or 6128.

The software itself isn't on Rom – it has to be loaded in from cassette or (for £8 extra) disk. However, it will allow you to access pages of Prestel (in all 16 colours), and that's what counts.

One final worry with this package is how reliable the equipment is. We know of people who've used it with no problems, but others have been less lucky. Still, if you can't afford the more sophisticated communications gear reviewed in our last issue, this could give you a very cheap way of joining the telecoms revolution.

D6450 Upright data recorder
Philips, £37.95

Dying for a good game? With one of these you can get it. You're not tied down to just disc software but the range of games on tape (if compatible) also unfolds before your eyes.

This recorder has a remote socket so that with the Amstrad cassette lead (a few extra pennies I'm afraid) the computer can actually start and stop the tape itself in the same way as a 464 would. The unit is computer compatible, with load and save buttons and a tape counter for recording tape positions.

There are obviously many other good, compatible recorders on the market although one owner of this machine said that it loaded tapes that wouldn't even load on a 464.

664

SSA-1 Speech Synthesiser
Amstrad, £29.95

A gadget that makes the Amstrad answer back. The package comes with its own ready-to-run software and is remarkably easy to use, rabbiting away in no time at all.

Nine new RSX (bar) commands have been introduced, the simplest of which are SAY and ECHO. The SAY command just takes a string and says it while the ECHO command will read things off screen like listings and printed questions. The speech produced by these two commands is often imperfect and the spelling of words will have to be altered in order for them to be better pronounced.

Alternatively the APHONE command will allow you to build up and say words using the 59 allophones and 5 pauses provided. Allophones are sounds in speech which more closely imitate the real sound than simply spelling out words. There is a good range of them and with some experimentation easily understandable speech is possible.

The instructions are comprehensive and helpful giving details on how to use all of the commands, how to use the hardware in your own programs without the software and even how to access it in machine code.



Kempston Formula One Joystick
Kempston Micro Electronics, £16.95

Also known as the Competition Pro, this is one of the oldest and most respected joysticks around. Many players wouldn't use anything else. It has a sturdy shaft with a ball on the top and two large base fire buttons that can be hammered away at.

Its origins are obviously in the arcades where the two handed technique of using a stick with a ball on top and a panel fire button became second nature to a lot of gamers. Others may dislike the uncontoured handle and the lack of a top fire button – it's a case of whatever type of stick you prefer.

The stick is very hard-wearing keeping its responsiveness, diagonals and feel through decathlons, shoot-em-ups and platform games alike. Still not very cheap but then you have to pay for quality.



Special

6128 TV Modulator
Amstrad, £29.95

You've just finished a hard day's word-processing on your faithful little green screen and feel like a break. You load up your favourite game and...yuk. There has to be a better option than this, and there is. A TV modulator will allow you the best of both worlds for only £30.00 extra.

It may seem like a needless luxury at first but to fully appreciate games you need colour and to use the machine for word-processing or other serious uses you need a green screen. Rather than buy two monitors a modulator can solve the problem. All you've got to do now is buy a colour TV!

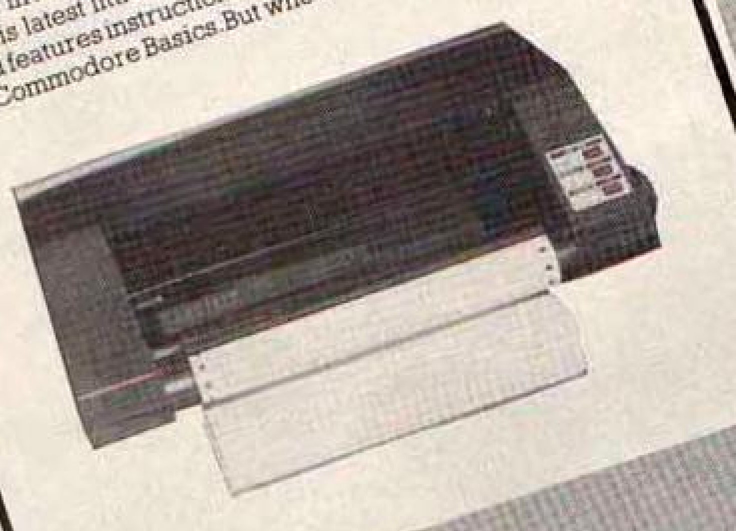
DMP 2000 printer
Amstrad, £159.95

This latest Amstrad printer is certainly value for money and its sleek lines make it a rather more attractive object than most peripherals.

It's a dot matrix printer and unlike its predecessor, the DMP 1, is Epson compatible. It prints in draft and Near Letter Quality and has a possible 144 combinations of typeface including italic, bold, condensed, proportional...

The NLQ printing is good for a printer of this price while Epson compatibility means that it will run software designed with Epsons in mind. All sorts of graphics programs can therefore be used for screen dumps, or you can use the printer's different modes to write your own programs.

The fact that the DMP 2000 sells for only £159.95 means that it undercuts most of its competitors by a wide margin and should be a best seller in no time. Other manufacturers may be a bit worried because this latest little gem is compatible with other microcomputers and features instructions for using it in Microsoft, Spectrum, BBC and Commodore Basics. But who wants one of those things.



3-Way Command Control
Wico, £29.95



Wico have long been renowned as the producers of expensive but reliable joysticks and this is one of their best. It features an interchangeable handle that can either be contoured, thin and ribbed, or large-headed.

There is a small stick fire button that is spring-loaded for good rapid fire and a base fire button for those right handed people that prefer it. The base is sturdy but has no suction cups. The stick is very responsive but can also stand up to a lot of punishment without losing that feel.

The internal switches allow good multi-directional movement although you may take some time to get used to the sensitivity of the stick's response. The main selling point is the high quality of production and durability – hence the high price. There are plenty of good sticks for less money but I like the feel of this one.

6128

Dart Light Pen
Dart Electronics, £39.95



This pen may be £20.00 more expensive than the 464's choice but it has an improvement in technology that makes drawing as sophisticated as using a mouse. The secret is in the (expensive) fibre optics that allow you to control the pen on screen with a great deal of accuracy.

The point on screen doesn't jitter about as with the cheaper products but remains steady so that freehand drawing is as easy as with a mouse – and because you're using a pen it feels much more natural.

The pen comes with its own interface and a software program that will allow you to produce pretty pictures. The graphics package isn't as comprehensive as the Electric Studio one but with the ease of freehand drawing this isn't too important. The only major niggle is having to keep changing between the picture screen and the menu to change colours, brushes and other functions.

Three screen modes can be used and various functions like fill, unfill, elastic line, box, circle and eraser are available. Screens can be saved to tape or disc for use later. Instructions are included to allow you to incorporate the pen in your own programs. There is also a sprite editor allowing you to create a sprite that can be printed any number of times anywhere on the screen. It won't turn me into Picasso. But near enough.

Pick Pocket!

"The only fully professional word processor on the Amstrad"

Amstrad Action, October 1985



The new Pocket WordStar is so professional Amstrad Action helped us to write this advertisement — with their appreciation of the latest word processor product from the WordStar range — the most popular word processing packages in the world.

Read some of the other things they said:

"Pocket WordStar is for people who regularly have to sit long hours at a Keyboard . . ."

"The designers have taken great care to make things as easy as possible. The manual is superb, clearly written and well cross-referenced"

"Any reformatting required can take place instantly. This one fact alone is enough to ensure that Amstrad Action's writing team is now transferring to WordStar".

JUST ARRIVED

Pocket WORDSTAR

TAKE YOUR CUE FROM AMSTRAD ACTION AND PICK POCKET WORDSTAR

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND YOUR LOCAL STOCKIST, CONTACT THE SOLE DISTRIBUTORS **CUMANA** ON **0483 503121**



ONLY **£119** INC. VAT

Specifications

Operating System: CP/M 2.0 or higher

CPU Memory: 56K of RAM is required

Pocket WordStar can operate with one disk drive containing at least 120K.

MicroPro.

MicroPro International Ltd, Haygarth House, 28-31 High Street, Wimbledon Village, London SW19 5BY

WRITE ON!

3 new word processors tested

We inaugurate our first Serious Software section – successor to the late lamented Biz Progs – with a searching look at three of the latest sub-£50 word processors. We could have called it 'Which wrod processor?', but we've already used that title – which caused a certain amount of confusion anyway. Chris Anderson is once again our man at the controls.

TASWORD 6128

Tasman Software, £24.95 disk

Here's some great news for anyone with a 6128 (or anyone thinking of getting the new DK'Tronics memory expansion for their 464/664). Tasman have produced a new version of their popular word-processor to take advantage of the 6128's extra memory. At the same time they've made a number of important improvements, resulting in a program which offers brilliant value for money.

The main advantage of the extra memory is that you can work on LONGER TEXT FILES. The file being edited is stored in the 6128's extra bank of memory, allowing you to work on single-file documents as long as 10,000 words. Meanwhile the main program is used to store the entire program, so that once you've loaded it, you can remove the disk and replace it with a data disk containing only text files. This arrangement allows you to use disks very efficiently, but you will find that working on a long text file will cause delays whenever you scroll through the document or access the main menu, this despite the fact that the entire document is held in RAM.

Another improvement, perhaps of greater value, concerns the INSERT MODE. Our main criticism of Tasword in our issue 1 review, was that inserting new text into an existing paragraph, was a tedious, multi-stage process. First you had to split a line, then type, then reunite. But the new Tasword has a command, 'auto-insert mode', which means you can just move the cursor anywhere in the document, type away, and text will automatically move to make room for the new matter.

The program doesn't fully reformat as you type, so you're left with a ragged-looking paragraph until you specifically order a reformat. But even here there is a big improvement. You now have the option of having reformatting carried out almost instantly instead of having to watch words moved one at a time into position, an initially interesting but ultimately tedious process. The resulting insert mode is now as good as that in *Wordstar*.

Here are the other main improvements:

The SEARCH AND REPLACE function now offers a few extra options such as selective or global changes (but you can still only search for a single word).

The amount of memory available for USER DEFINED KEYS has been expanded to a fat 1000 characters – so you could input say, ten different sentences, each at the touch of a key.

FILES can be erased without exiting the program.

A NOTEPAD facility has been introduced, allowing up to a screen of info you don't want printed to be saved with a file.

When you add all this to the existing good features of Tasword – easy to learn, well suited to a single-disk system, excellent customisation facilities, automatic word-count, good on-screen help, good manual, flexible print options, good mail-merge facility – it amounts to a pretty impressive package.

It all goes to prove that you don't need to buy Amstrad's remarkable new PCW 8256 to get a powerful word-processor at ultra-low price. A 6128 plus this version of Tasword does very nicely indeed, thankyou.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Capable of handling massive documents in a single file.**
- **Insert mode greatly improved.**
- **Instant reformatting now available.**
- **Customisation options even more powerful than on previous versions.**
- **Turns your 6128 into a powerful word-processing system.**

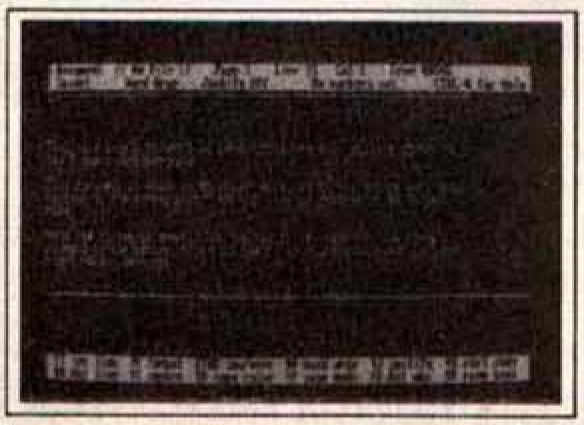
B A D   N E W S

- **A lot of delays when handling large text files.**

PROTEXT

Arnor, £39.95 ROM, £26.95 disk, £19.95 cass

If you don't have a 6128 to run the new version of Tasword, you needn't despair. Arnor's new word-processor also offers excellent value and will run on a 464 and 664 as well as the 6128.



The main editing screen in Protext.

It's supplied on cassette, disk, or sideways ROM, the advantage of the latter being that the program is available as soon as you switch on, and much more memory is available for your document file – a total of over six thousand words. The disadvantage of getting it on chip is that it's considerably more expensive, especiall; if you don't already own a sideways ROM card to plug it into.

During NORMAL EDITING the program is very similar to Tasword 6128. An alterable on-screen ruler shows the current margins and tab settings, while a status line gives information on such things as whether you're in insert or overwrite mode, the current page and line number, and the free text space remaining. You can move round a document quickly and easily using the cursor keys in combination with the Shift and Control keys.

The way the INSERT MODE operates is also very similar. Text is automatically moved to make space for new matter, but afterwards you must order a reformat to tidy things up.

One advantage for people with colour monitors is that text can be entered in 40-column mode for extra clarity. You can always then switch back to the normal 80-column mode to view text before printing.

Numerous other features are included. There's an excellent



SEARCH AND REPLACE function modelled on that in *Wordstar* and offering a host of useful options, including the ability to search for paragraph ends and for "wild-card" characters. Blocks of text can be MOVED, COPIED, DELETED, PRINTED, WORD-COUNTED or SAVED into new files. What's more all the commands available can be brought on screen at the touch of a couple of keys, so no need for constant references to the manual.

It's also hard to fault the PRINTING options. Things such as page numbers, headers and footers can be used in all manner of different ways, and it is easy to insert into your documents commands to do things such as switch on italics, bold and condensed print.

CUSTOMISING the program to do things such as set up user-defined keys and special printer control codes isn't quite as easy as in Tasword but can still readily be done. The program comes configured for an Epson compatible printer – to make changes you can store on disk or tape your own "printer driver" but this must then be loaded in separately every time you reuse the program.

Accompanying the package is a pretty-good 39-page manual, complete with index and summary tables (an early photocopied manual has now been superseded.) It attempts to start from complete basics and should serve as a pretty good introduction to word-processing for newcomers.

This is the first sub-£50 Amstrad word-processor to seriously challenge the position of Tasword. As far as it goes, it offers overall a slightly more powerful range of features than Tasword 464 or 464D and is broadly comparable with Tasword 6128. But there is still reason to consider even the earlier versions of Tasword in preference to Protext. Firstly Tasword 464D (as well as Tasword 6128) offers a mail-merge facility, which can give whole new power to a word-processor if you regularly send out letters or documents with slightly-varying sections. So far Protext does not. Secondly, Tasman offer several other powerful programs such as TasPrint and TasSpell which can be used on Tasword created files. A spelling checker in particular can be a very useful addition for many authors.

Those reservations apart, Protext is an excellent addition to the range of serious Amstrad software.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **Available on a chip for instant access without occupying main memory.**
- ► **Extremely powerful editing features, including superb search and replace.**
- ► **More flexible printing options than any other 464/664 word-processor under £50.**
- ► **Good file-handling, including ability to split files.**
- ► **Clear manual plus on-screen help.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **Can't at present be used for mail-merge or with spelling checker.**

BRUNWORD

Brunning Software, £25 disk, £16.50 cass

For most users this latest Amstrad word-processor probably won't compare very favourably with either Tasword or Protext. There are several reasons for this.

For a start, the program is not particularly user-friendly – there are no on-screen help menus, so constant references to the manual will be needed.

Secondly there is no automatic "word-wrap" on text entry – so words can be split on-screen between the end of one line and start of the next. This immediately gives your work a peculiar look, although it's not that severe a drawback. The text will not be printed that way, and can in any case be formatted on-screen to reunite broken words. Text is always entered in 40-column mode, although you can view the results and carry out some limited editing in 80-column mode. For a green-screen owner, this switching between the two can be tiresome, but if you have a colour monitor, 40-column mode is probably preferable in any case.

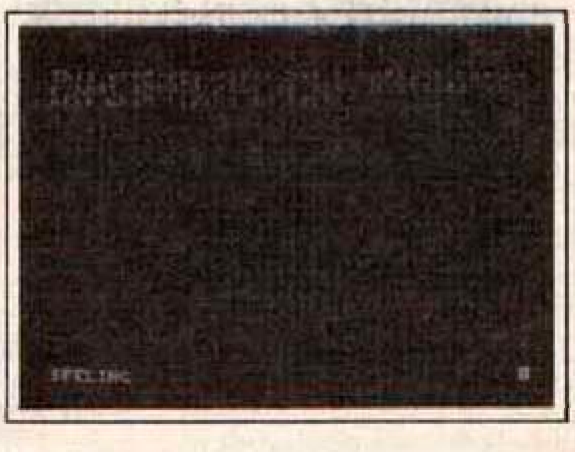
The range of editing and printing options is not as extensive or sophisticated as those on the other two processors. For example there is no Replace command, only Find. And there is no facility for automatic page numbering or the printing of headers and footers.

Another point is that it is impossible to turn off right-hand "justification". All the documents you print out will have extra spaces inserted to ensure the right-hand column is straight. I personally feel this can look very strange, especially when there are relatively few words to a line.

Finally on the debit side there are a number of slightly quirky aspects to the program. For example, if you try to enter a line of characters longer than the current margin settings without any spaces, the results are very strange.

But there are also some good features. The program comes complete with spelling checker, and currently represents the cheapest way of getting this feature (with Tasword you have to buy a separate program, just released). By using data compression techniques, the program can hold a dictionary of 7000 words in RAM (10,000 in the disk version) and use this for a fast check through your text file for words it doesn't recognise which it will query. The cassette version is supplied with a dictionary of 4000 words, while the disk version comes with 6000 – both can be expanded by you.

The spelling checker works fine, but it is questionable how much use it will be with these relatively small dictionaries. The 6000 entries in our version of the program did not include words such as "understood", "challenge" and "discover". Using the dictionary also reduces the maximum size of your text file to 'about seven pages'. One other feature that will appeal to some is that inserting or deleting matter within a document is extremely easy – text is automatically pushed along or closed up to compensate. You don't have to worry about ragged lines being formed. And if you don't trust the people you work with you may appreciate the facility to assign a security code to each document.



The spelling checker in operation in Brunword.

My overall impression is that the program is best suited to someone whose main use for a word-processor is in writing short to medium-length letters and who is keen on having some sort of spelling check without spending too much.

G O O D N E W S

- ► **The cheapest way of getting a word-processor plus spelling checker.**
- ► **Insert mode is very simple to use.**

B A D N E W S

- ► **No on-screen help.**
- ► **No automatic word-wrap.**
- ► **Justification cannot be switched off.**
- ► **Smaller range of editing and printing features than other progs.**
- ► **Limited text file size.**



ZX SPECTRUM

TASWORD TWO
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD TWO for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £13.90 microdrive cartridge £15.40

"Without doubt the best utility I have reviewed for the Spectrum"
HOME COMPUTING WEEKLY APRIL 1984

"If you have been looking for a word processor, then look no further"
CRASH JUNE 1984

With 64 characters per line on the screen and a host of useful features TASWORD TWO is the ideal word processing package for the Spectrum owner.

TASPRINT
THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £9.90 microdrive cartridge £11.40

A must for dot matrix printer owners! Print your program output and listings in a choice of five impressive print styles. TASPRINT utilises the graphics capabilities of dot matrix printers to form, with a double pass of the printhead, output in a range of five fonts varying from the futuristic Data-Run to the hand writing simulation of Palace Script. A TASPRINT gives your output originality and style! The TASPRINT fonts are shown below together with a list of compatible printers.

TASMAN PRINTER
INTERFACE

TASPRINT PRINTER INTERFACE for the ZX Spectrum £39.90
RS232 Cable for ZX Interface 1 £14.50

Plug into your Spectrum and drive any printer fitted with the Centronics standard parallel interface. Supplied complete with ribbon cable and driving software. The user changeable interface software makes it easy to send control codes to your printer using the method so successfully pioneered with TASWORD TWO. The cassette contains fast machine code high resolution full width SCREEN COPY SOFTWARE for Epson, Mannesmann Tally, Shinwa, Star, Tandy Colour Graphic (in colour!) printers. TASCOPY shaded screen copy software for this interface (value £9.90) is INCLUDED in this package.

The TASCOPIES and TASPRINTS drive all Epson compatible eight pin dot-matrix printers e.g.

		BROTHER M1009
AMSTRAD DMP 2000	NEC PC-8023B-N	BROTHER HR5
EPSON FX-80	MANNESMANN TALLY MT-80	SHINWA CP-80
EPSON RX-80	STAR DMP 501/515/5610	DATAC PANTHER
EPSON MX-80 TYPE III	COSMOS-80	DATAC PANTHER II

COMPACTA - bold and heavy, good for emphasis
DATA-RUN - A FUTURISTIC SCRIPT
LECTURA LIGHT - clean and pleasing to read
MEDIAN - a serious business-like script
PALACE SCRIPT - a distinctive flowing font

TASPRINT output shown at less than half size

TASMERGE
THE MAIL MERGER

TASMERGE for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £10.90

Transfer data from MASTERFILE to TASWORD TWO! Letters and forms typed on TASWORD TWO can be printed with addresses and data taken from MASTERFILE. The mail merge facility allows, for example, multiple copies of a letter to be printed, each containing a different name and address taken from your MASTERFILE data. To use TASMERGE you must have one or more microdrives as well as TASWORD TWO and MASTERFILE by Campbell Systems (version 9 or later).



TASWIDE
THE SCREEN STRETCHER

TASWIDE for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £5.50

With this machine code utility you can write your own Basic programs that will, with normal PRINT statements, print onto the screen in the compact lettering used by TASWORD TWO. With TASWIDE you can double the information shown on the screen

AMSTRAD CPC 464–664–6128

With the exception of TASWORD 6128 all the programs described below run on all of the 464, the 664, and the 6128.

TASWORD 464
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD 464 for the Amstrad CPC 464, 664, and 6128 cassette £19.95

"There is no better justification for buying a 464 than this program"
POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY NOVEMBER 1984

ZX SPECTRUM MSX·EINSTEIN

TASCOPY
THE SCREEN COPIER

TASCOPY for the ZX Spectrum with Interface 1 cassette £9.90 microdrive cartridge £11.40

The Spectrum TASCOPY is for use with the RS232 output on ZX Interface 1. It produces both monochrome (in a choice of two sizes) and large copies in which the different screen colours are printed as different shades. With TASCOPY you can keep a permanent and impressive record of your screen pictures and diagrams. A list of printers supported by TASCOPY is given to the left.

TAS-DIARY
THE ELECTRONIC DIARY

TAS-DIARY for the ZX 48K Spectrum and microdrives. Cassette £9.90

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THE SPELLING CHECKER

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TASWORD 464-D
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD 464-D for the Amstrad CPC 464, 664, and 6128
disc £24.95

This is the new TASWORD especially developed to utilise the capabilities of the Amstrad disc drives. A major new feature is a powerful mail merge facility. TASWORD 464-D will only run on, and is only supplied on, disc.

TASWORD 6128
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD 6128 for the Amstrad CPC 6128
disc £24.95

TASWORD 6128 utilises the additional 64K of memory in the CPC 6128. This gives text files that are over 60K long. TASWORD 6128 includes mail merge and all the other features of TASWORD 464-D. With a new notepad mode and other additional capabilities TASWORD 6128 is the most powerful of the TASWORDS.



TASPRINT 464
THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT 464 for the Amstrad CPC 464, 664, & 6128
cassette £9.90 disc £12.90

Can be used to print AMSWORD and TASWORD text files in addition to output from your own Basic programs. Drives the Amstrad DMP-1 in addition to the printers listed on the opposite page.

PRINTER CABLE FOR AMSTRAD CPC 464, 664, and 6128 £9.90

COMMODORE 64

TASWORD 64
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD 64 for the Commodore 64
cassette £17.95 disc £19.95

Many Commodore 64 owners have asked for this product which is now available. All the well known TASWORD features plus eighty characters per line on the screen! This is the only word processor for the Commodore 64 giving eighty characters per line on the screen – so that "what you see is what you get" on eighty column printers.

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THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT EINSTEIN for the Tatung Einstein
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Print TASWORD EINSTEIN text files in one or more of the TASPRINT fonts.

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TASCOPY QL
THE SCREEN COPIER

TASCOPY QL for the Sinclair QL
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TASCOPY QL adds new commands to QL Superbasic. Execute these commands to print a shaded copy of the screen. Print the entire screen or just a specified window. TASCOPY QL also produces large "poster size" screen copies on more than one sheet of paper which can be cut and joined to make the poster.

TASPRINT QL
THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT QL for the Sinclair QL
microdrive cartridge £19.95

TASPRINT QL includes a screen editor used to modify files created by other programs, such as QUILL, or by the user from Basic. These modified files include TASPRINT control characters and may be printed, using TASPRINT, in one or more of the unique TASPRINT fonts.

AMSTRAD · QL
· COMMODORE

TASCOPY 464
THE SCREEN COPIER

TASCOPY 464 for the Amstrad CPC 464, 664, and 6128
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Adds two new Basic commands to give both a standard shaded screen copy as well as a "poster size" copy which is printed onto two or four sheets which can be cut and joined to make the poster. Drives the Amstrad DMP-1 in addition to the printers listed on the opposite page.

TATUNG EINSTEIN

TASWORD EINSTEIN
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD EINSTEIN for the Tatung Einstein
disc £19.95

A sixty four character line display and the ability to hold over five hundred lines of text at any time are just some of the features of this TASWORD for the Tatung Einstein. Full interaction with the disc system – e.g. TASWORD detects the presence of added drives and allows their use.

MSX 64K COMPUTERS

TASWORD MSX
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD MSX for 64K MSX computers
cassette £13.90
MSX PRINTER CABLE £8.00

With all the features of the Spectrum TASWORD TWO including the amazing sixty four character per line display. The TASWORD MSX machine code program utilises the 32K of memory not normally available to Basic allowing over five hundred lines of text to be held in memory. The cassette includes a version of the program that can be transferred to disc.



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AMX MOUSE– Dissected



Pete Connor goes mousing and wrestles with WIMPS

Mice have been around for some time, but have only lately begun to creep onto micros. They're friendly little creatures – at least, their producers *say* they are – intended to bring ease of use to the harassed computer buff. AMX claim that the Amstrad Mouse transforms the computer 'into a much more user-friendly device and provides facilities normally only available on more expensive machines.' Is it true?

Well, yes, it is – to a certain extent. The AMX package contains the mouse itself and a suite of programs on tape or disk of which the most accessible is *Art*. While the other two programs – *Icon Designer* and *Pattern Designer* – presume that you have something useful in mind, *Art* can be used for sheer self-indulgent pleasure.

Setting up the Mouse is pretty straightforward. The interface plugs into the joystick port, the mouse into the interface. Power is provided by plugging the interface lead into the Amstrad's power socket: Arnold's own lead is then connected to the interface.

The next step is to load *AMX Control*, the program which runs the system, before going on to the other programs.

AMX *Art*

The program presents you with a screen which, initially, you will find somewhat bewildering. What's that arrow for? And why are those little pictures down both sides of the screen? By now you're probably reaching for the manual, which explains almost all you need to know.

The little arrow is your mouse's pointer; moving the mouse moves the pointer, which you use to select from menus and to move on screen. Down the right of the screen are the mode icons, while on the left is the pattern bar. Both of these scroll up or down to reveal the full extent of the options. At the top are four pull-down menus – when you move the pointer over them and press execute they display their options. As you move up or down the option currently selected is highlighted in inverse and chosen by pressing Execute.



A Samurai is born – the first stage of the drawing

First of all you need to select a utensil from the mode icons at the right of the screen. There's a good variety, including spray-can, roller, and pencil. These can all be used in a variety of widths. Then go over to the pattern bar at the left of the screen and select one of the 32, seven of which are displayed at any one time in the scrolling window.



A few more lines, a little shading – it's looking good

Then what? As the manual says, 'You may well ask what AMX Art can be used for.' They supply a challenging answer – 'Well, its uses are limited by one single factor. Your IMAGINATION.' You may start to panic at this point if, like me, you don't consider yourself to have much in the way of this faculty. But fear not. You can still have a good time.

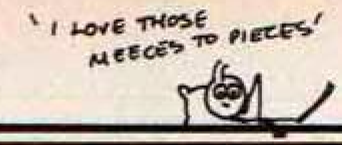
If you've selected spray-can and a reasonably solid pattern, just move the pointer into the drawing area press Execute and graffiti will start appearing on screen in relation to where you move the mouse on your desk. It may not be art, but at least it's a start.

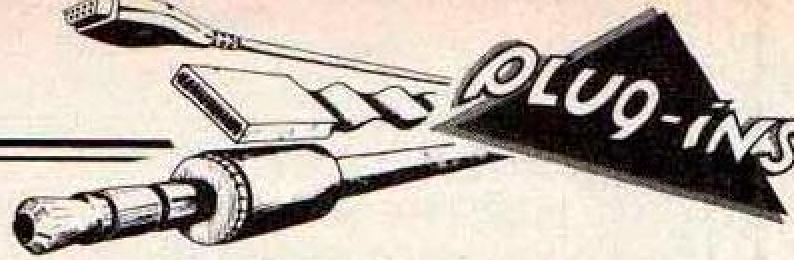
In fact, at the beginning you'll probably find that your efforts produce the kind of things a chimpanzee would be ashamed of. This is because control of the mouse is initially strange; you either overdo or underestimate the movement. But it doesn't take long to get used to this, and when you do you can start to produce some pretyy fancy stuff.

The wide range of patterns and modes available means that after some experimentation even the most inept of artists will create works that surprise them by their sophistication and..er..beauty.

Masterpieces and scribbles produced with the mouse can be saved to cassette or disc and dumped to Amstrad DMP 1 or any Epson-compatible printer.

While spray-can and roller work very smoothly, line-drawing with the pencil is more problematic. This is because it works on a rubber-banding principle, stretching lines all over the place. So to avoid a real mess you have to keep Move pressed before Executing your wish. However, if you want to draw free-





hand, you keep Execute pressed all the time. Line-drawing is not the easiest mode to get the hang of, and I confess that I didn't master the technique – but I suspect that this is one mode where a lot of practice is the key to greater fluency.

Icon and *Pattern Designer*

The first of these programs allows the user to design and store icons for use use in his or her own programs. As with *Art*, the program works on a 'point and press' principle.

The screen displays on the left a 16x16 character grid in which each character corresponds to a single pixel in the icon. The squares can be toggled to black or white by pressing the Execute button. When the design is finished, press the Move button and transfer it to the icon file area. The size of the design area means that it is fairly easy to produce icons that resemble the desired object.

Pattern Designer works in a similar way to produce patterns for later use in the *Art* program. Again there is a 16x16 grid, but this is now split into four quarters so that toggling between black and white will produce a symmetrical design. There are already 32 design patterns available in the *Art* program, so you'll really need to have something very specific in mind if you want to design your own.

G O O D N E W S

- **Very user-friendly**
- **Great fun – even if you're no artist**
- **Given time you can produce some real masterpieces**
- **Good manual**
- **Saves to tape or disc – dumps to Amstrad or Epson-compatible printers**
- **Can be used in your own programs**

B A D N E W S

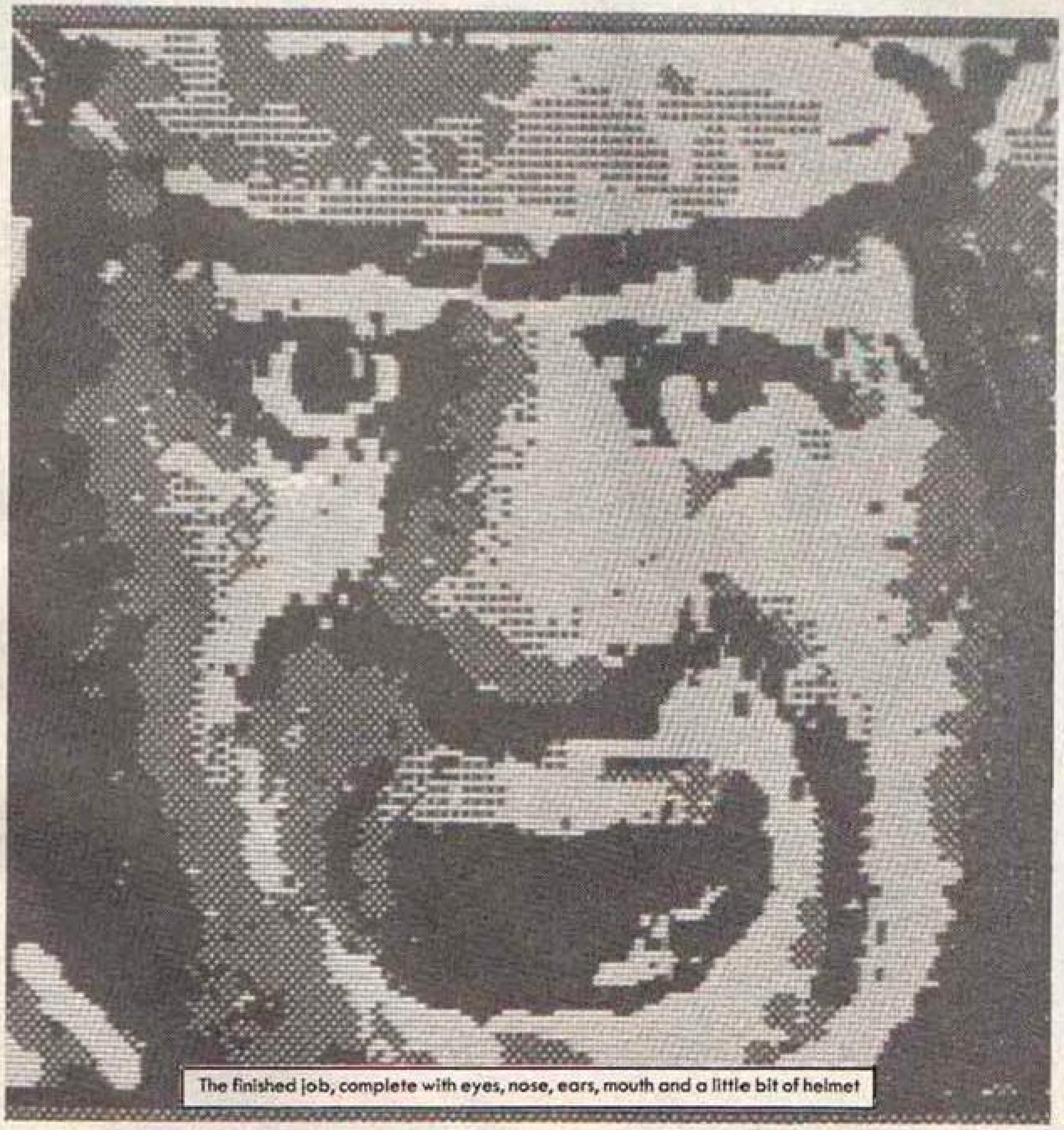
- **Not cheap at nearly £69.95**
- **Monochrome only**
- **Difficult to produce smooth curves**

What is a mouse?

No, this isn't a biology lesson. A mouse is basically a desktop input device that operates like an inverted tracker ball – instead of moving the ball with your hand you place the mouse on a flat surface, pushing it around to move a pointer on screen. On the bottom of the plastic body is a ball-bearing which transmits signals to the computer. On the front are three buttons – Execute, Cancel and Move – which allow you to perform functions, cancel them or move things around the screen.

You can't plug the AMX mouse directly into your Amstrad, but it comes with an interface that plugs into the joystick port. The interface power lead is then connected to the micro's power socket, while the Amstrad's own lead is plugged into a socket on the interface.

Once thing you must have when using a mouse is a flat surface. An old pitted desk that you've carved your initials into will not do – the ball-bearing will not always connect with the surface and the signal will not make it through to the computer.


The finished job, complete with eyes, nose, ears, mouth and a little bit of helmet

WIMPs

Windows, icons, mice, pointers. WIMPs is just about the trendiest buzz-word in microcomputing. You get them on the Apple Macintosh – now you get them on the Amstrad.

Window: an area of the screen separated from other areas, in which messages can be displayed or operations performed.

Icon: a symbol, usually pictorial, representing a function of the software. So, with AMX *Art*, you select a picture of a jug filling a glass if you want to fill in an area of the screen. If you're using *Icon Designer* and you want to get rid of a design, you move it over to the dustbin.

Mouse: an input device, explained in another box on this page.

Pointer: what you use to select the icon. With the AMX mouse it's an arrow that points to the required icon.

The AMX Mouse costs £69.95 from Advanced Memory Systems Ltd., Green Lane, Appleton, Warrington. Tel 0925 602690.

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BrunWord

* including a 'Spelling Check' routine!



Introduction

Brunword is now available for the Amstrad computer with many enhancements and new features. The programme is really two programmes in one – a powerful wordprocessor and a fast spelling test programme.

Spelling Check

A section of memory is allocated to the dictionary containing up to 7000 words. At the same time about 7 pages of text can be stored in the editor file area. As the dictionary is in RAM the testing is incredibly fast, taking about 8 seconds to test an A4 page. Words are flashed onto the screen as they are tested and the programme stops if the word is unknown. The word can then be stored, edited or ignored. The tape version is supplied with 4000 words (disc version 6000 words).

Security Code

A security code up to fifteen characters long can be entered and then this is used to encode all text before saving to tape or disc. This is not a toy but a highly secure system.

Wordprocessor

This is designed to be easy to use, easy to learn and yet is a comprehensive wordprocessor.

The text editor uses the CLR and DEL keys as normal and the Cursor keys with SHIFT and CTRL provide full cursor control.

Even though the exact print format can be seen in the 80 column mode (and edited in the disc version) "Brunning Software" have designed a unique formatting routine, which by entering text in the 40 column mode allows the full use of colours and full size characters. Text is typed in with the basic appearance that is required. Address on the right, "Dear Sir" on the left, "Yours sincerely" in the centre etc. When this is printed the programme works out how to maintain this same appearance for the different width enabling any width between 40 and 130 columns to be printed without reformatting and with spaces added evenly to justify the text. (Punctuation then left and right).

The ESCAPE mode provides many facilities all based on key words. Cut, paste, move, find, and files can be saved on tape or disc but can also be temporarily stored in another part of memory enabling instant access to several files.

Disc Version

This is arranged for ease of use with any Amstrad disc drive and automatically adjusts the memory for the best use. Supplied with 6000 words already in the dictionary (expandable to 10,000), which allows 8 pages of text to be in the memory at the same time. With no dictionary about 14 pages can be in memory. This version allows both 40 and 80 column editing and has a simple system for deleting files from disc.

Colour

The text that is typed into the editor is in yellow. Marked text is in red and can be blocked moved, deleted or saved. Programme menus, paragraph end markers and instructions are in blue. Special printer control instructions are in red. Pleasant to the eyes and easy to see at a glance what is happening.

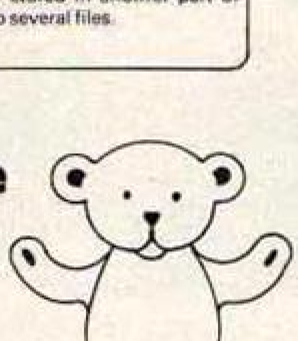
Printer

BrunWord will operate correctly with any printer that connects to the printer port. The printer control codes can be set up for any printer and are saved along with each file.

Send Cheque/Postal Order To:-

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34 Helston Road,
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Telephone (0245) 252854 (24 Hours)



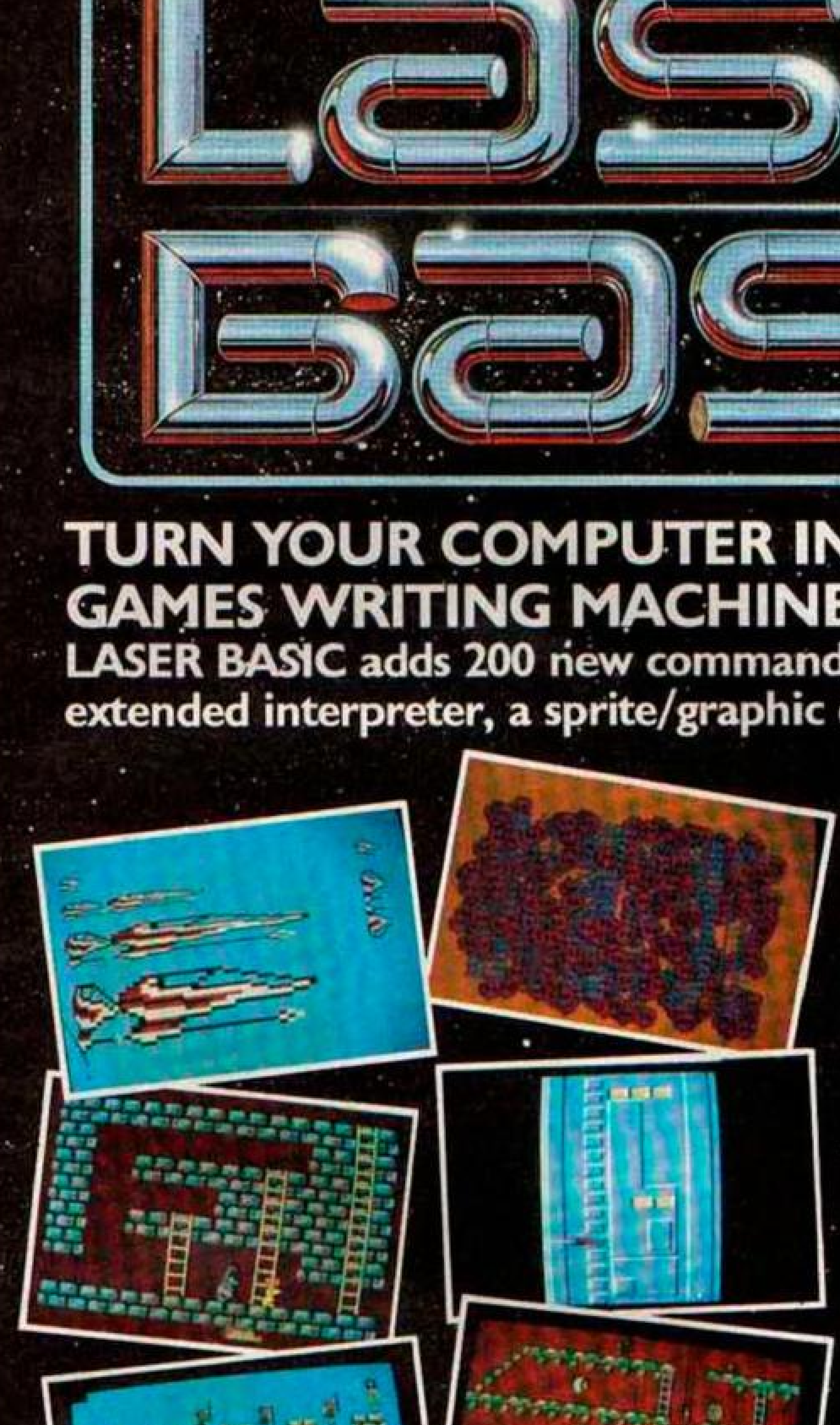
Tape £16.50

Disc £25.00

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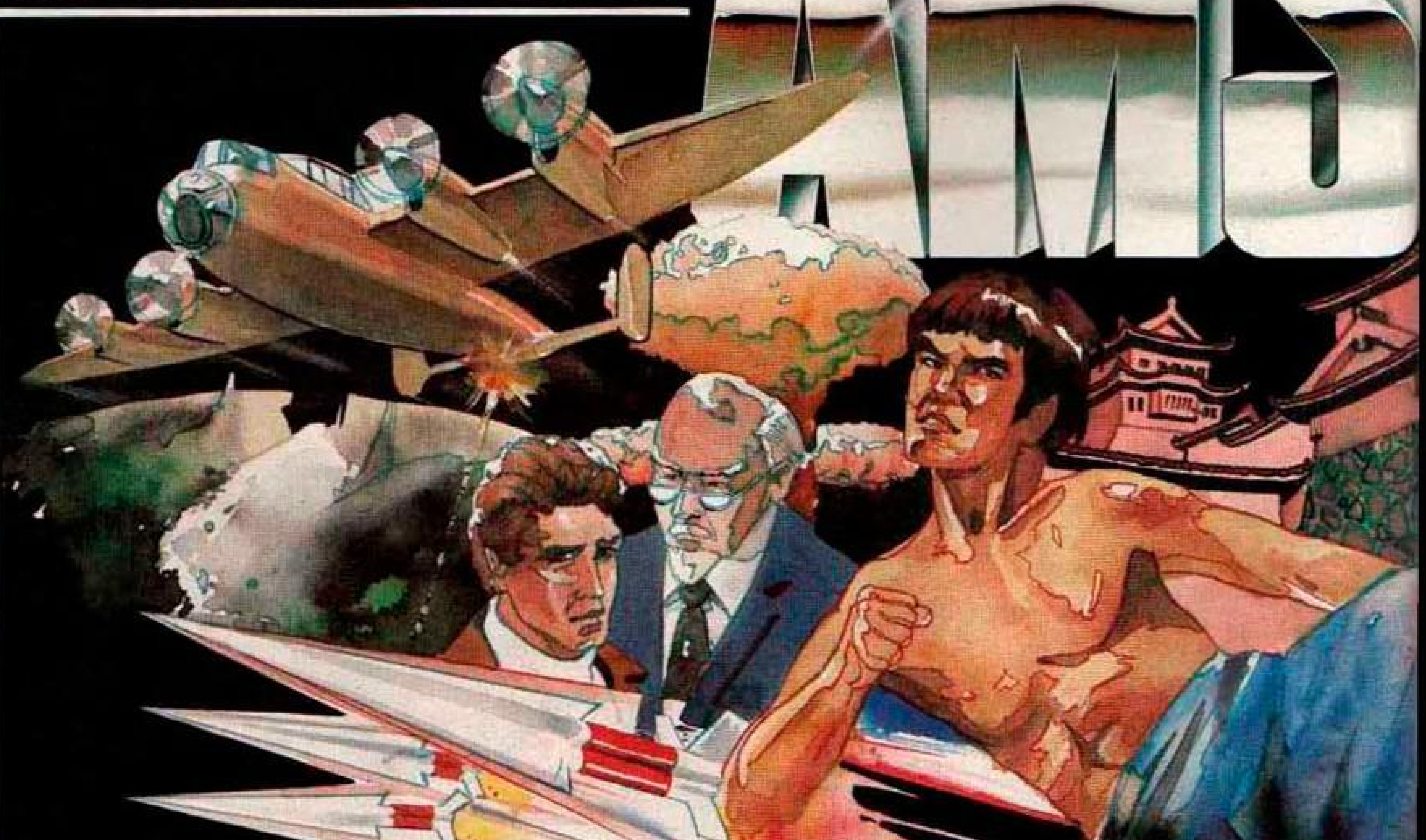
In "Bruce Lee" you will experience the power and the glory of Bruce Lee, one [...] the greatest masters of the martial arts.

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*All screen shots as seen on the Commodore 64

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UTILITIES

Font64
Comes on cassette (£7.95) or disc (12.95) and allows you to create, edit, animate and print your own font and character designs. Supplied with 6 pre-designed fonts and easy-to-use screen dump RSXs for use on DMPI or Epson compatible printers.

The Knife
A powerful file and sector editor for use with CP/M. Allows you to recover accidentally erased files, patch your disc directly, cut-and-paste sectors, search your disc for a pattern, edit sectors in situ etc. etc. Comes complete with an extensive manual that explains CP/M's directory format and costs only £12.95.

The Torch
A disc-based tutorial that explains the mysteries of the CP/M operating system to the new user. Supplied on the same disc is a screen-based menu system allowing you to create menus of your favourite programs on disc and select them easily and instantly. All this for only £12.95.

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Access

EXPERT SYSTEMS

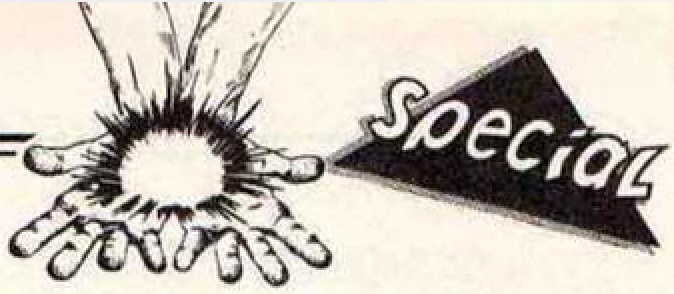
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MACHINE CODE CRACKED

OK, so you've read the manual, brushed up your BASIC, tried writing a program or two, and now you want to progress to greater things. Maybe it's because your BASIC version of *Lord of the Rings* takes six years to update the screen, or maybe it's just because you can't squeeze the 7000 different string arrays into the memory available – whatever the reason, sooner or later every programmer worth his salt wants to learn machine code. It's compact, it's flexible, it's blindingly fast, and it appears to be totally incomprehensible! But never fear, in a sudden flash of inspiration, James Hartley puts the whole thing in a nutshell and offers some valuable tips to beginners.

The power of code

Amstrad users are a spoilt lot when it comes to BASIC programming – just compare the graphics and sound commands of the CPC range with, say, a Commodore 64, which won't even let you BEEP without carrying out a load of awkward PEEKs and POKEs. And not only is the hardware easily controlled – Locomotive BASIC is also fast in execution and even provides sophisticated interrupt handling using the EVERY and AFTER commands.

Compared to the power and speed of a well-written machine code program, however, even Locomotive BASIC begins to look like Noddy-speak. If you're new to machine code and don't believe me, try typing in the listing and see what I mean...

However, it's all very well seeing other people writing versions of *Defender* in 4K and burbling on about hex, accumulators, and branch on carry – the trouble comes when you try to find out for yourself exactly what's going on. Many people find mastering BASIC no problem but flounder helplessly when it comes to learning machine code.

There are a number of good reasons for this. The first is that the only way to pick up the subject (unless you've the luxury of being able to attend classes) is to pick up a good book on the subject – but which one? Half the machine code tutorials on the market succeed brilliantly in making a simple subject totally incomprehensible. The other half look really good, but assume that you've got a Spectrum, Memotech, Tandy Co-Co, or some other dinosaur to play around with, which isn't much good for us Arnold owners. Solution – read the later paragraphs of this article where we pick out a few recommended Amstrad specific titles.

The second problem is that machine code is so horribly simple that everyone falls over their own shoelaces trying to explain it. The solution to this is simply to get rid of your feeling that the whole subject is something like Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and start recognising machine code for what it is – the ABC of computing, as simple and as straightforward as that. And just to help you, we're now going to give you a brief introduction to the subject to get you started.

What code can do

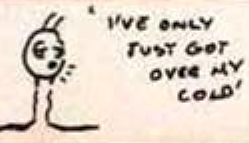
Before we start, let's just mention a few things that machine code can and cannot do. What it can do is give you a way of writing programs that will fit into a lot less space than their BASIC equivalents and which will run many times faster – in some cases well over a HUNDRED times faster! What's more, you don't have to make a life-or-death decision to abandon BASIC altogether and dive into deep machine code waters – if you want, you can continue programming in BASIC and just use machine code to speed up the parts of your program that Locomotive cannot reach.

Secondly, machine code gives you a greater degree of control over the hardware in your machine. For example, you can write a reasonably simple program that will enable you to have several different screen modes operating SIMULTANEOUSLY on screen, with hi-res monochrome Mode 2 in one window, flexible four-colour Mode 1 in another, and chunky Mode 0 somewhere else. You can't certainly can't do THAT in BASIC! You also get greater control over the sound chip, and can 'talk' to peripherals such as disc drives, printers, modems etc without the limitations of BASIC.

Finally there is one thing to bear in mind that machine code is not well suited for, and that's doing complicated sums. The reason for this is that for the most part you will find yourself restricted either to unsigned integers in the range 0 to 65536 or signed (ie plus or minus) ones in the range -32767 to +32768. This doesn't mean you can't do complex arithmetic – you can, and it will still run much faster than in BASIC, but you will need to put in a lot of effort to do so. In reality, however, you will find that there are very few times when such effort is really required.

Demo Program

```
10 MODE 2
20 REM a quick demonstration of machine code
30 REM first we'll POKE the machine code program
into memory
40 MEMORY HIMEM-50: proglength=12: routine=HIMEM+1
50 FOR loop=1 TO proglength
60 address=HIMEM+loop: READ code: POKE address,code
70 NEXT loop
80 PRINT "We'll run a short BASIC routine, counting"
90 PRINT "from 1 to 30000 - get your stopwatch"
100 PRINT "ready to time it - press a key as soon"
110 PRINT "you're ready to start..."
120 i$=INKEY$: IF i$="" THEN 120
130 PRINT: PRINT "OK, start the watch when you hear
the beep...": PRINT
140 FOR n=1 TO 2500: NEXT n: SOUND 1,100,20:
PRINT "Counting...."
150 FOR n=1 TO 30000: NEXT n: SOUND 1,100,10: PRINT:
PRINT "Done it! Stop the watch!!"
160 PRINT: PRINT "Press a key when you're ready"
170 PRINT "to run the machine code program"
180 i$=INKEY$: IF i$="" THEN 180
190 CALL HIMEM+1: SOUND 1,100,10
200 PRINT: PRINT "Done it already!"
210 PRINT "...so quick it wasn't worth timing, eh?"
220 END
230 DATA 6,255,197,6,118,0,16,253,193,16,247,201
```



Inside the Chip

So much for the background, now for the facts. As you probably know, inside your Arnold sits a chip known as a Z80A. This chip does most of the work of the computer and is therefore known as the **CPU** (Central Processing Unit) or MPU (Micro-Processor Unit). It is basically a vast array of little bits-and-bobs, consisting for the most part of little switches called flip-flops, so called because they can flip on and flop off.

The internal mechanics of the CPU are so designed to cause it to behave in a certain way. As soon as it's powered up, it begins to execute an endless loop of activity which is divided into **cycles**. It buzzes along quite happily, executing these cycles over and over again until you turn the machine off.

The first cycle is called the **fetch cycle**. During this operation, the Z80 sends an instruction to the computer's memory saying 'Please make available to me the contents of memory location number nnn'. When you first turn the computer on, it asks for the contents of Memory Location Zero, and just so that it can remember which location to ask for next, it stores the number of the next location (in this case, one) in its **program counter** – a mini-memory-location inside the chip especially provided to enable the Z80 to keep a track of where it's going.

The CPU then receives the contents of that location and stores it in its **instruction register**, which is another little mini-memory-location inside the chip set aside for this purpose. The reason why it's called the instruction register will become clear in a moment.

The second cycle is called the **decode cycle**. During this phase, the Z80 takes a look at the contents of the memory location it has fetched. Since, on the Amstrad, each location is a pigeon-hole with eight bits (ie a byte), each bit of which can be either on (ie a one) or off (a zero), it follows that the contents being examined by the Z80 can be considered as a number between 0 and 255 – i.e. an 8-bit binary number between 00000000 and 11111111. If you're not sure about binary, then check the Appendix of your Amstrad manual.

This number that has been fetched by the Z80 is treated by it as an instruction. In other words, the internal design of the chip is such that when it discovers a particular number in its **instruction register**, it will automatically respond in a certain way. This response is carried out during the third cycle, the **execution cycle**, and may consist of any one of a large number of operations which we shall discuss in a minute.

Once it's fetched, decoded, and responded to the instruction, the Z80 then starts to do the whole thing all over again. The first thing it does is to look in its program counter and see which memory location it should **address** next. It then asks for the contents of that location, updates the program counter to point to the next one, and sets about seeing what it's fetched this time... and so on and so on...

What code *really* is

We're now in a position to see exactly what machine code is. The numbers that the Z80 fetches from memory didn't get there by accident – they were put there by a programmer. These numbers constitute a series of instructions to the processor, and these instructions, when linked together, form a program. This program, because it's written in the only form that the Z80 can understand (i.e. 8-bit numbers between 0 and 255), is said to be written in **machine code**.

For example, if you look at the listing provided, you can see that all it does is to poke a few 8-bit numbers into consecutive memory locations. These numbers constitute a short machine code program that counts from 1 to 30000. The BASIC command CALL places the start address of this program into the Z80's program counter. This has the effect of diverting the Z80's attention to this program, which it will then run. The final instruction in the program is number 201 – this instruction is known as the RET instruction and operates in exactly the same way as the BASIC RETURN (from sub-routine) command. In this case, it forces the Z80 to jump back to where it was going when it received the CALL instruction, which in this case is back into the BASIC program to print "Done it!...".

Mnemonics

In fact all machine code instructions have names which reflect the operations they represent. These names are usually referred to as **mnemonics** (because they help you remember the different operations) and as well as the RETurn instruction, there's the ADD instruction, the DECrement instruction, and so on – each with its own numeric code. Some instructions consist of not just one byte, but two, or even three in succession – such as the Decrement-then-Jump-if-Not-Zero (DJNZ instruction), which operates rather like the BASIC FOR...NEXT loop, decrementing a stored value and, if it hasn't reached zero, jumping back to re-execute a section of code.

As you can imagine, remembering the numbers associated with each of the many instructions is almost impossible, so to make things simpler, there are a number of special programs on the market which allow you to type in the mnemonics and then translate them into the appropriate code before storing it in memory. These programs are called **Assemblers**, and a machine code program written in mnemonic form is called an **assembly listing**, or said to be in **assembler** or **assembly language**. Assemblers for the Amstrad include *Devpac* package from Hisoft, Picturesque, and Arnor's *Maxam*.

Registers

Most machine code instructions involve the manipulation of **registers**. We've already met two of these, the instruction register and the program counter. There are several other ones which, rather than being reserved for special purposes like the two just mentioned, are available for use to the programmer as general-purpose mini-memory-stores within the Z80. They can be treated rather like variables in a BASIC program, so, for example, to add 2 and 2 together, we might put a two in one register, a two in another register, and then issue an instruction to the Z80 to add these two registers together and store the result in a third register. This is a bit like saying in BASIC:

LET a = 2: LET b = 2: LET c = a + b

There are eight registers on the Z80, labelled H,L,D,E,B,C,A, and F. The latter two are slightly different – the A register, called the **accumulator**, is used mainly for arithmetic operations while the F register contains a number of system flags which are adjusted according to the outcome of certain operations. For example, if a mathematical calculation gives a result of zero, the Z or Zero flag in the F register will be set to one. Typical mnemonic instructions involving these registers include, for example, LD A,B , which means LoaD the A register with the contents of the B register, or INC H, which means INCrement (add one to) the contents of the H register, and so on.

Registers only have room for 8 bits of information, and so can only store numbers in the range 0-255. They can however be treated as pairs – HL, DE, BC, and AF – under certain circumstances, so you can hold 16 bit numbers for some purposes (in particular for addressing memory locations). This should explain to you not only why machine code doesn't handle complex arithmetic easily, but also why the Z80 can only directly address 64K of memory – this is the largest number it can fit into its registers.

The Interpreter

So now you know what machine code is! The only problem that some people have at this point is in finding out what BASIC is! If the Z80 can only understand numbers, how on earth does it cope with PRINT, LET A$ = "Fat Freddy", and so on? The short answer is that it doesn't. When you first switch on the machine, the Z80 starts off as normal from location zero, and finds itself running a machine code

program called the BASIC INTERPRETER. This program accepts BASIC programs input by the user and translates them into machine code so that the Z80 can understand them. It is, in a sense, a sort of glorified high-level assembler.

As a point of interest, since you can CALL a machine code program from BASIC using the expression CALL address, you can even use BASIC to CALL the BASIC INTERPRETER itself – try typing CALL 0000, which will tell the Z80 to start right at the beginning of memory as it does when you first turn on the machine...but don't do it if you've got a program in memory, as you will lose it in the process.

You can also call the BASIC INTERPRETER more directly by typing |BASIC, since the interpreter program is labelled BASIC in the ROM, and the Amstrad operating system enables certain programs (called Resident System Extensions, or RSX) to be called by name rather than by address – the BASIC INTERPRETER is one of these.

As a machine code programmer you will find this facility extremely useful – typing |INVADERS is a lot more understandable to the user than typing CALL 2570 or whatever.

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

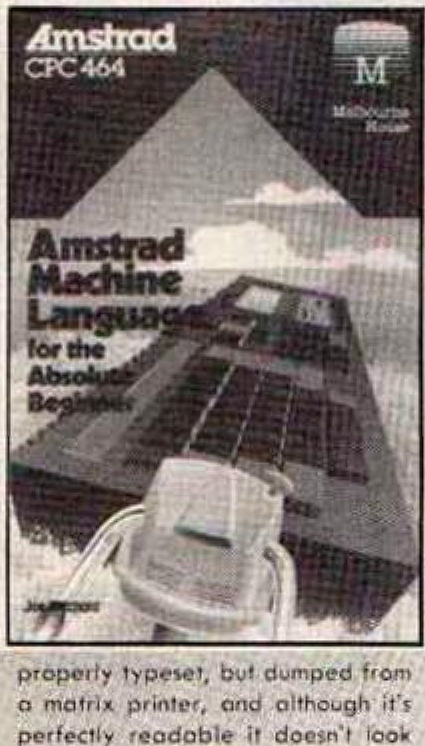
Where do you go from here? The next thing you will need is a good book, or rather books. The problem here is one of cash, since the sad truth is that certain publications are almost essential for machine code programming.

The two most important are a massive tome by Rodnay Zaks called *Programming the Z80*, published by Sybex at around £15.00, and the *Complete Amstrad Firmware Manual*, which changes hands at around £20.00. You can, however, leave the latter for later consideration since its contents are rather technical for a beginner. It is essential, though, if you want to make proper use of the graphics and sound facilities of the machine, since it gives the addresses of the various machine code routines provided by the operating system in ROM for manipulating the hardware, thereby saving you years of toil and frustration.

Your most immediate purchase, however, is likely to be an Amstrad specific machine code tutorial. There are quite a few of these on the market, and we'll look briefly at three of the more important ones.

The most expensive one is, you guessed it, also the best. *Introducing Amstrad CPC 464 Machine Code* by Ian Sinclair, it's published by Collins at £8.95. It's a comprehensive introduction to the subject and in addition gives some useful information on the way BASIC uses the machine, which can help you to combine machine code and BASIC programming to greater effect. There are quite a few example programs, and the book is professionally presented. Its most serious weaknesses are a lack of in-depth discussion of the sound and video chips and little mention of the resident Amstrad firmware routines. The latter is not, however, too serious since you'll have to buy the firmware manual anyway and that contains everything you'll need to know.

A rather cheaper book is published by Melbourne House. Written by Joe Pritchard and called *Amstrad Machine Language for the Absolute Beginner*, it costs only £5.95, but the difference in price is reflected in the quality of the publication. It's not properly typeset, but dumped from a matrix printer, and although it's perfectly readable it doesn't look very pretty.



Joe Pritchard's book contains some useful information on programming the sound chip and includes some example programs, but there aren't nearly as many as in Ian Sinclair's publication. Furthermore, there isn't quite as much visual material in the form of graphs, tables, etc – all of which can be of great help in understanding difficult points. Discussion of assembler programs is also limited. I'm afraid that if you're serious about learning machine code, then you'd be better advised to spend the extra and get the Collins book just mentioned.

Master Machine Code on your Amstrad CPC 464 & 664 by Jeff Naylor and Diane Rogers is rather different to the previous two books. The authors obviously don't believe in wasting words, and in some cases this leads to complex subjects being dismissed too quickly for the absolute beginner. It contains a lot of duplicated material from the Firmware Manual which is liable to be a waste of paper when you go out and buy it yourself. Furthermore, rather than include lots of short example programs (as the other books try to do) it tends to plump for long ambitious projects, such as a Database. These will of course be useful for some people and give good practice, but my feeling is that they're a bit much to swallow first time out. Furthermore, there are no diagrams and this tends to emphasise the rather dry, dense style of the text. It's published by Sunshine at £6.95 – again, you'll probably do better to spend the extra on Ian Sinclair.

Other useful sources of info worth looking at are *Z80 Machine Code for Humans*, by Tootill and Barrow (Granada/Collins), *Z80 Assembly Language Programming* by Lance/Leventhal (slightly cheaper than Rodnay Zak's book mentioned earlier and a possible alternative). If you want to do a lot of applications programming in machine code, you could also glance at *Z80 Assembly Language Subroutines* by Leventhal/Saville which contains many ready-made solutions to common problems, such as finding substrings within strings, sorting lists, etc. It isn't cheap however (approximately £13.00), and some of the solutions aren't very elegant, but it might help to give you some ideas.

As you can see, your bill from the bookshop could be a bit of a killer – and you'll need to buy an assembler program as well – but one thing's certain, you'll find the added enjoyment that comes from total mastery of your machine well worth every penny.





THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM

ACTION TEST

If you have your doubts when people tell you that the quality of software is getting better – just take a look at what we've got for you this month. Almost half our games are AA Raves. That means that each one has an overall rating of at least 80%. Games of this quality – games of *any* quality – need the most rigorous testing they can get, which is why we've come up with what we think is a pretty good method.

The easy way to do reviews is to bung someone a tape, ask them to dash off a couple of hundred words, then print it together with a cassette cover or – if you're lucky – a screen photo. But you deserve more, much more. Our reviewing system has the following advantages.

Page after page of sensational game reviews



1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years (not to mention sore trigger finger), he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer – tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review get looked at by at least two people, many of them by three. Not only does this mean you can read an additional view under the 'Second opinion' heading, it also means that our ratings are more reliable, because they're arrived at by a process of debate among those concerned.

Incidentally we're now extending this principle even further by seeking out YOUR opinions and ratings on new games. Read the Ed lines page for details of a scheme which will turn our review pages into a living forum of Amstrad owners.

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots, but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference (even though the art department kick up an incredible fuss about the extra work – oh, they do.)

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up pretty unsure of the reviewer's overall opinion? To make our own views absolutely clear we include a concise summary of them under the Good news/Bad news headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to be able to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this – just look out for those featuring long bars with dark tips!

So there it is, a state-of-the-art reviewing system specially designed for state-of-the-art Amstrad software – beware of dated, inferior models!

COMPATIBILITY

All the games reviewed in this issue – with exception of *Big League Soccer* – will run on all the Amstrad home computers: 464, 664, 6128.
We've either tested them ourselves or extracted solemn promises from the software houses concerned that they are compatible.

Big League Soccer **will run ONLY on the 464.**

Big League Soccer
Certain important changes have taken place since the review of this game was written. It is now to be marketed by Viper Software and will cost £6.95 on cassette.

AA Ratings – how they work – AA Ratings

We've come up with five different headings which, we reckon, cover all that's important about a game. The most important is the final one which represents our overall assessment of it. Games which score 80% or higher earn the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

The ratings categories are meant to be fairly self-explanatory, but that wasn't why we didn't print anything about them last issue – we just ran out of space! So here are the missing explanations. Hopefully you'll agree our categories make a refreshing change from the usual.

GRAPHICS is the first category. Basically, this means..er..what the game looks like; colour, definition, animation, imagination. It's safe to say that monochrome Noughts and Crosses will score fairly low.

SONICS next. Sweet music, horrible noise, silence, all will be rated on quality and quantity. This rating involves the use of ears.

GRAB FACTOR We think you'll like this one. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? Will you miss an episode of The Archers to play it? High Grab Factor means that the whole office abandons work, Bob Wade whoops with delight and even the publisher looks mildly pleased. 100% means the game is more addictive than cider.

STAYING POWER You may have got the habit, but how long are you going to keep it? Staying Power tells you how often you're likely to return to a game. That depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. An addictive game with only a couple of screens to it will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power, one with a 1000-screen playing area but lacking in playability would be the other way round.

AA RATING Nothing to do with cars. This is the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, quality of packaging and instructions, reliability and any other relevant factors we can think of. You won't go far wrong with any game over 80%.

MASTERGAME

AA RAVES

GAMES TESTED

BIG LEAGUE SOCCER

Adam Whitlock, £2.50 cass, keys only



Football Manager has long been seen as the definitive football strategy game on any micro – now it seems to have competition from a game that is cheaper and better. It follows a very similar format to *FM* with you taking on the manager's role of controlling both the playing and financial side of the club.

You begin by choosing a club name from the 88 provided or naming your own team. You can also choose club colours and one of the skill ratings from Amateur to World Class. You're given a squad of players and some cash and placed in the fourth division with 21 other teams to battle out a 42 game season.

The main menu provides you with a list of options including playing a match, entering the transfer market, changing names or levels, saving the game, examining the league table and the fixtures and results. When you decide to play a match several stages have to be completed before you are shown the highlights of the game.

You have to pick the players from a squad with the ideal distribution being a goalkeeper, four defenders, three midfielders and three forwards. These all have skill, form and energy ratings which determine their effectiveness and monetary value. You can pick the team to try to match the opposition's strengths and this goes to make up the teams overall skill and form.

The game is now played with 3D highlights as in *Football Manager*. The attacking team has two players against the defence's three and each team has a number of attacks at goal depending on their relative strengths. Defenders can block the ball when attackers shoot but the forwards may get a second chance. At half time the teams change ends and get back into action.

SECOND OPINION

Very nice little game this, although how the mighty Spurs ended up losing to Chesterfield in the Fourth Division beats me. And how can Crewe Alexandra bid over £100,000 for Peter Shilton? The only glaring problem in this simulation is the absence of Rochdale from the teams. It's an outrage.

PC

At the end of the game you're given the current financial position with the home team taking the gate receipts. The other results are also printed up 'videprinter' style and the bad news about which players have been injured or suspended is also revealed.

Back at the main menu you can discover the league position and further fixtures and also trade players. Players can be sold, although they may not fetch their stated value and you can also buy players from the choice of two you are given.

At the end of a seacn you can be promoted, relegated or even sacked. The latter will happen if you finish in the bottom three of division four or in debt and sometimes when you get relegated. Life at the top is tough.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Better than *Football Manager*.**
- **Cheaper than *FM*.**
- **Very long seasons with plenty to do.**
- **Nice 3D highlights.**
- **Ideal for football fanatics.**

BAD NEWS

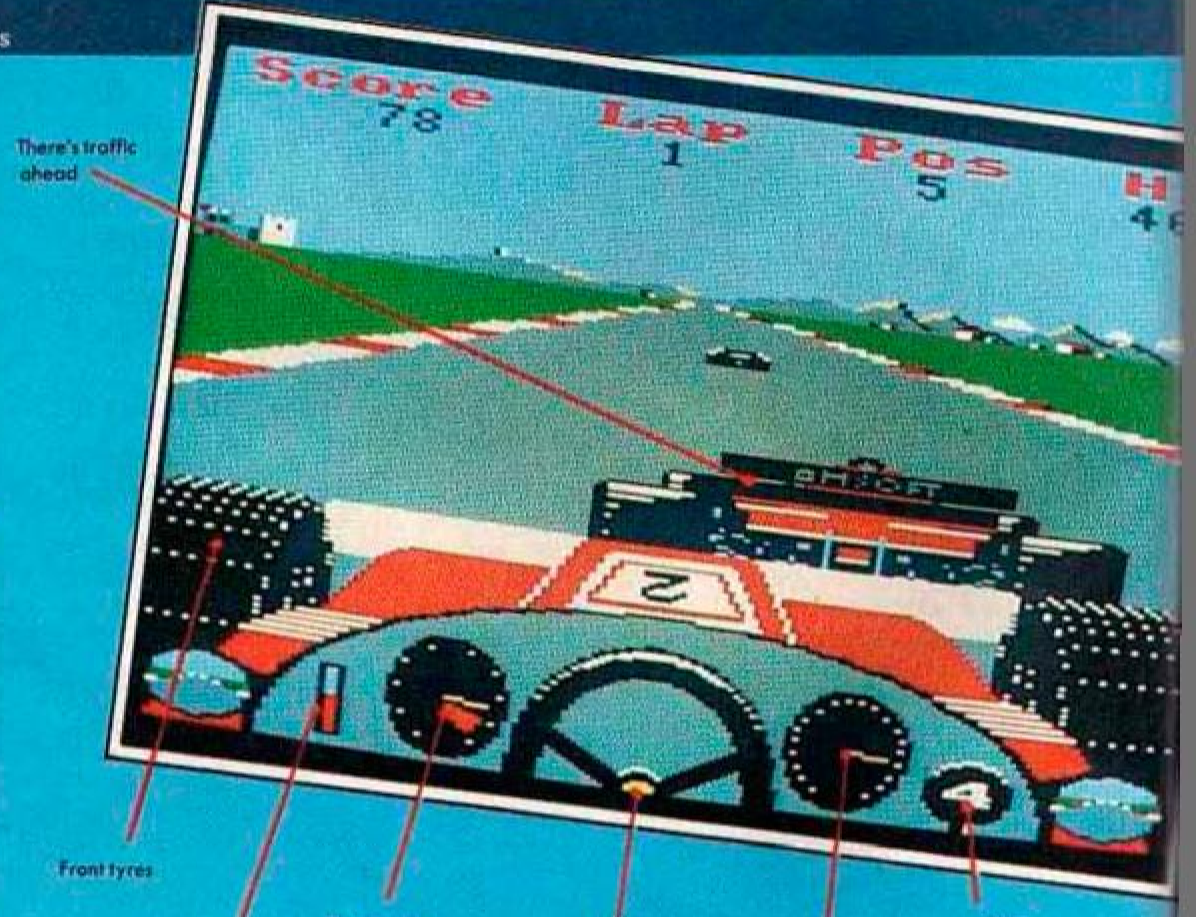
- **Picking players for every match gets repetitive.**
- **You'll be playing it until the early hours.**
- **Very similar to *FM*, so no points for originality.**

3D GRAND PRIX

Amsoft/Exopal, £8.95 cass, £13.95 disk, joystick or keys

Grand Prix Rally II came close to being a good racing game but at last we have the real thing with this excellent simulation of formula one race action where you could be the next Alain Prost, or Nigel Mansell, or whoever takes your fantasy.

The action takes place on eight different grand prix circuits with 23 other cars in the race with you. The aim is to finish in the top three on each circuit which will allow you to proceed to the next. If you fail to make the top three the game is over and you'll have to start from the first circuit again.



SECOND OPINION

Very enjoyable and very exciting. Motor racing's a bore to watch, but great to play on an Amstrad. Those other drivers though – they're worse than London taxis for cutting you up on corners. The circuits are cleverly constructed to give you only the slimmest of chances to overtake before you spin into a bend. The wing mirrors are a neat idea, allowing you to cut up the others as they have cut up unto you.

PC

The screen view is of the car cockpit, nosecone and front wheels, with the track and cars ahead. Within the cockpit are



The 3D action as Wimbledon head towards a glorious victory



The FM difference

The comparison with *Football Manager* is inevitable but this program has several things going for it that the original lacked. The most obvious is the price tag - very attractive.

The 3D highlights are much better than *FM* with big animated figures not little stick men. The handling of players is also better with common sense player transfers (if you offer the asking price you get the player), injuries and suspensions and a more constant guide to player form.

The presentation of the fixture and past results list is also good, there are more games in a season and bigger leagues. The only point it loses out on is the lack of a cup competition. So although it's fairly unoriginal it definitely improves on its predecessor.

GRAPHICS	46%
SONICS	15%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	84%
A A RATING	82%



gauges to indicate revs, speed, temperature and gears. There are also wing mirrors on either side showing the track behind the car and a status line at the top of the screen to indicate score, lap, position and hi-score.

You always start at Zandvoort in Belgium in pole position and with three laps ahead of you. The start of the race is signalled by two lights changing from red to green and allowing you to race off the line. There are four gears and neutral so you've got to work through these or you'll be left helplessly revving the engine on the line.

Your first place is lost almost immediately as another car races by you but this can be quickly regained as you blast into fourth gear. Cornering and passing other cars are the hardest parts of the racing and must be practiced in order to defeat the opposition. The front wheels turn the car left or right with acceleration and braking also under your control.

The other cars will try to get in your way and also get past you. To avoid them on straights you have to squeeze by on the edge of the track and at corners they will always try to cut you up on the inside, forcing you to go round the outside of the bend. When cars approach from behind they loom large in the wing mirrors - you may be able to block them by weaving about the track, but not for long.

Collisions with other cars, trackside signposts or running right off the track will bring the car to a dead halt and after a short delay you will have to get back on the track and accelerate through the gears again. The grass at the edge of the track can be clipped with one set of wheels and this will slow the car down rather than stop it completely. This happens when you take a corner too fast and if you're really gunning it you may lose control completely and slide out.

If the engine is run at too high revs for long it will overheat. This reduces the power output until it has cooled off, so particularly heavy- footed drivers may find themselves suddenly slowing and being passed by other cars.

Any delays may lose you positions in the race but to qualify for the next circuit you have to finish in the first three after three laps of racing. For the early circuits you can ease off once in the top three for safety but on later circuits the other drivers improve and you'll be at the limit for the whole race.

BW

The eight circuits

1 Zandvoort, Belgium, 2.6 mile circuit
2 Silverstone, England, 2.9 mile circuit
3 Anderstorp, Sweden, 2.5 mile circuit
4 Jarama, Spain, 2.1 mile circuit
5 Rouen, France, 4.1 mile circuit
6 Brands Hatch, England, 2.6 mile circuit
7 Kyalami, South Africa, 2.5 mile circuit
8 Mosport, Canada, 2.5 mile circuit

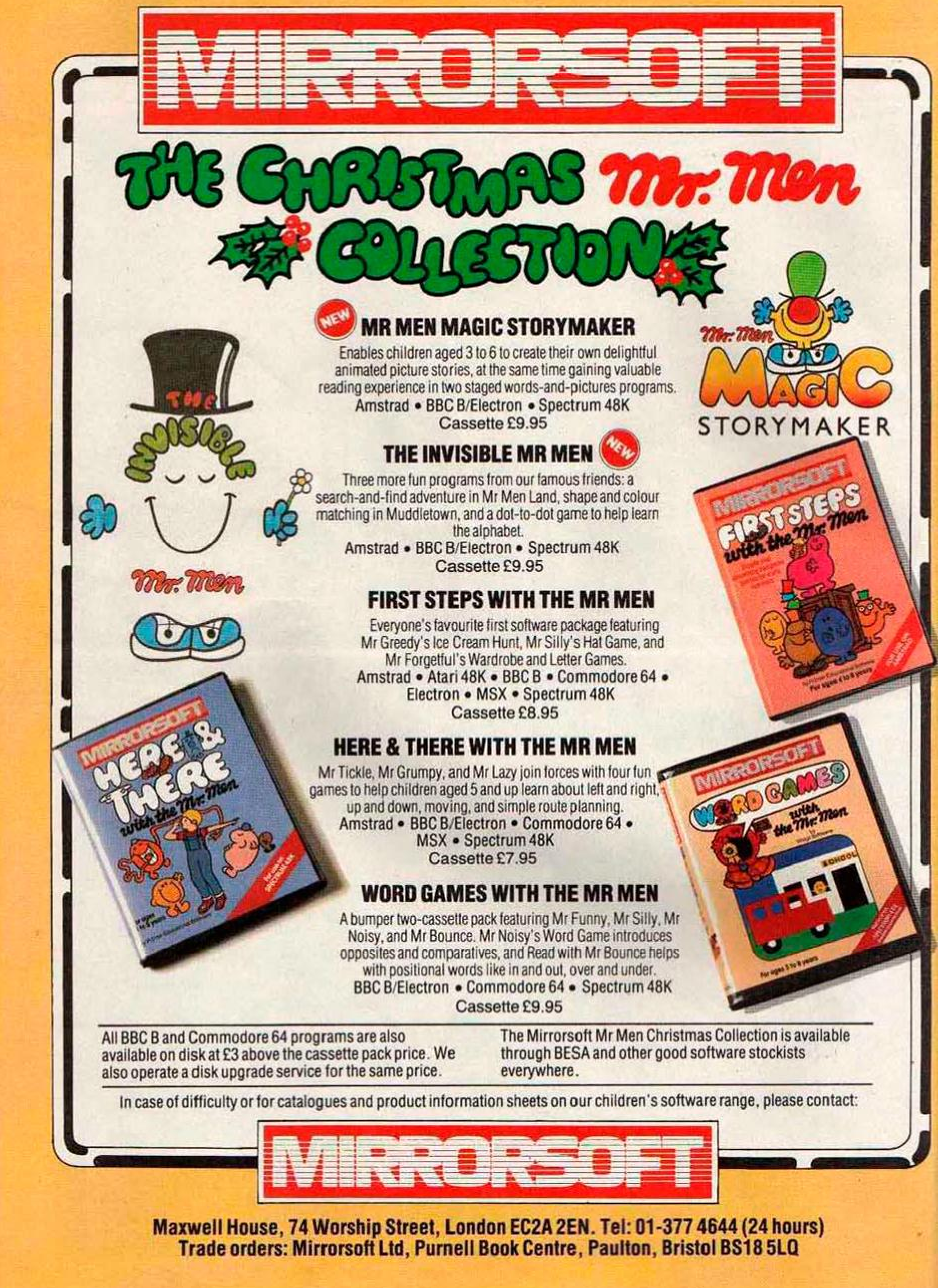
GOOD NEWS

- **Excellent graphics, particularly the car front wheels.**
- **Eight different courses.**
- **Intelligent opponents of increasing skill.**
- **Lots of skill needed to drive the car at its full potential.**
- **Wing mirrors are a nice touch.**

BAD NEWS

- **Ear numbing sound effects.**
- **If you fail to make the top three you have to start all over again at the start.**

GRAPHICS	88%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	88%
STAYING POWER	87%
A A RATING	87%


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SOUL OF A ROBOT

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

This game is subtitled *Nonterraqueous 2* and is in the same mould as that other cheapo cracker with 256 screens full of colour, movement and challenge. The seeker in the original game apparently failed in its mission and now a robot with the mind of a man has been sent on the same mission. The trouble is his soul is in torment and he wants to commit suicide by destroying the evil computer. A manic depressive robot. Where have I heard that before?

The screens are similar to *Nonterraqueous* with lots of colourful scenery occupying them. At least one side of the screen is open as an exit but sometimes all four are available. The big difference is in the method of getting about the screens - instead of flying the robot walks and jumps. This brings the platform game element to the action that is still mostly about charging around lots of screens blasting aliens on the way.

SECOND OPINION

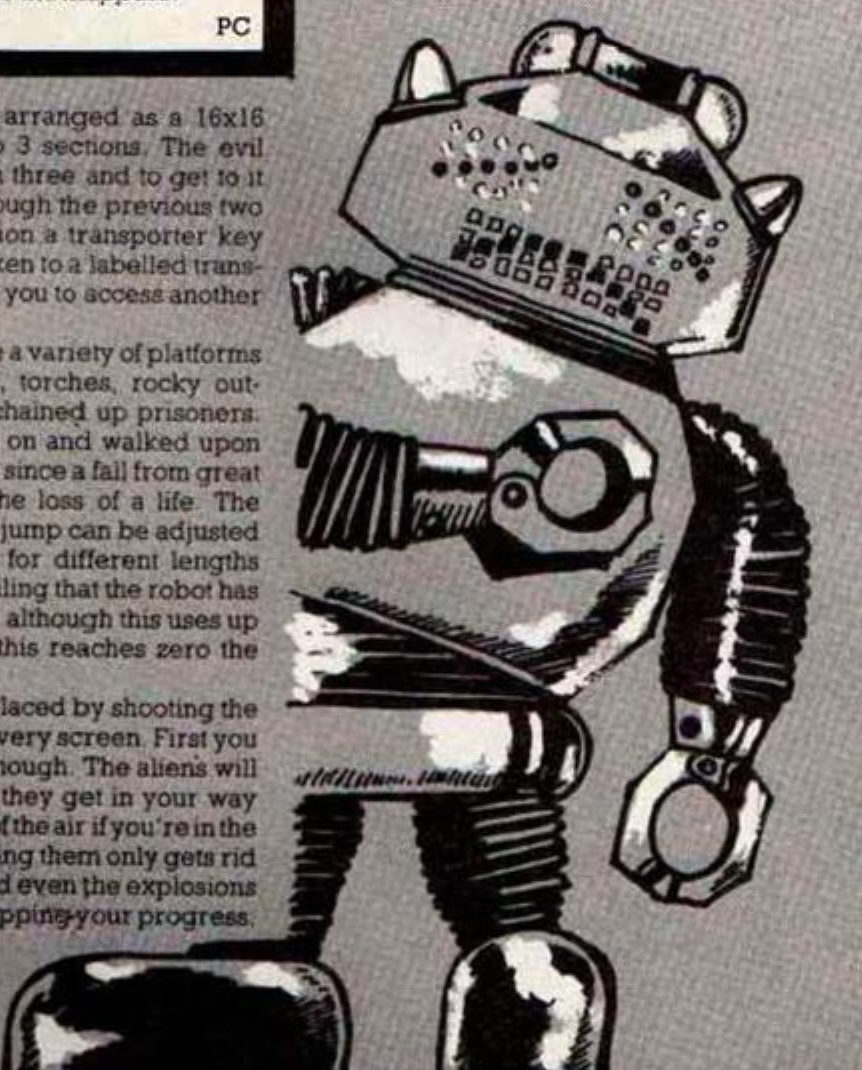
there were some very nice graphics in this prog - slaves bearing platforms on their backs, the robots head dropping off. The leaping robot moves not quite as smoothly as his Predecessors in Ultimate games, but you have to expect a bit of rough in a £1.99 program, don't you? Overall I found this even more compelling than Nonterraqueous *mainly due to the wittier graphics and the extra movement. It's certainly another one for the mappers.*

PC

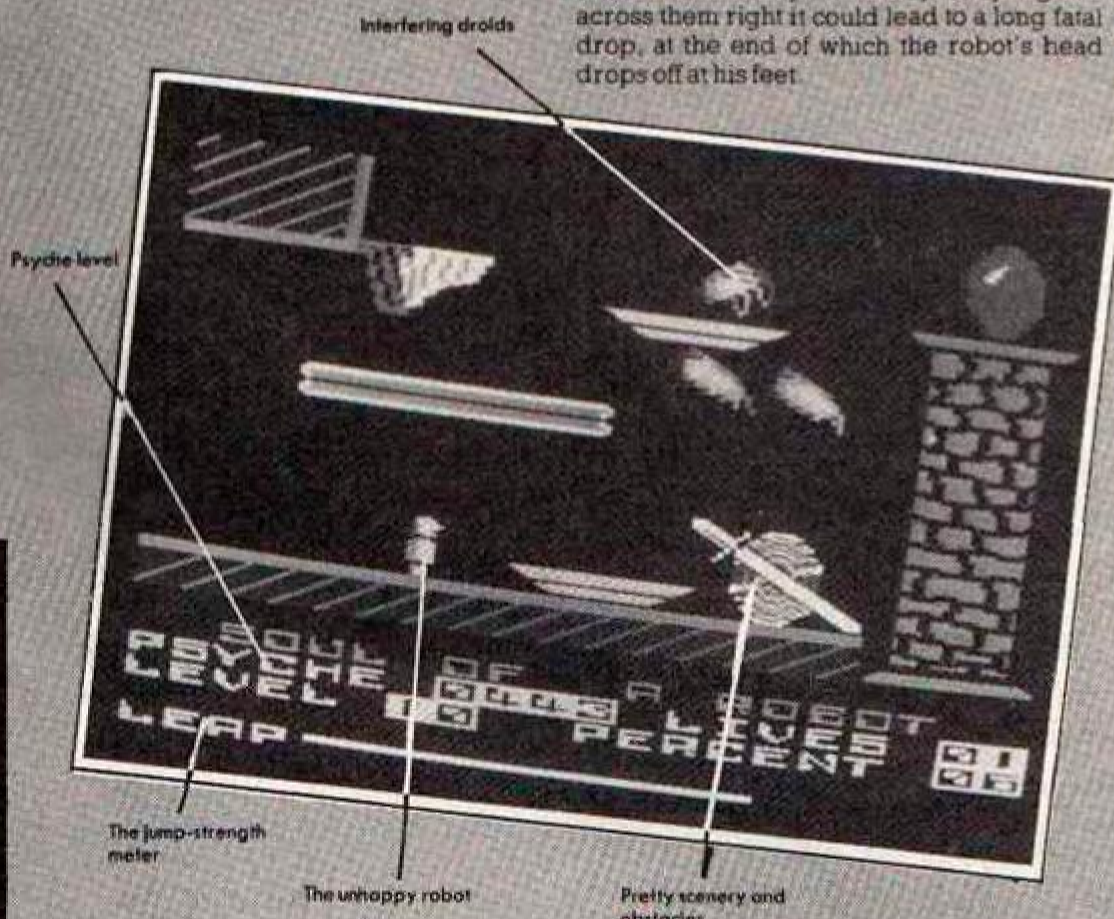
The screens are arranged as a 16x16 maze subdivided into 3 sections. The evil computer is in section three and to get to it you have to crack through the previous two sections. In each section a transporter key has to be found and taken to a labelled transporter room, allowing you to access another section of the maze.

Most screens have a variety of platforms in the form of clocks, torches, rocky outcrops, RIP signs and chained up prisoners. These can be jumped on and walked upon but care must be taken since a fall from great height will result in the loss of a life. The strength of the robot's jump can be adjusted between five settings for different lengths and heights of leap. Failing that the robot has a limited flying power, although this uses up psyche power and if this reaches zero the game ends.

Psyche can be replaced by shooting the aliens that appear on every screen. First you have to find the laser though. The aliens will cause problems since they get in your way and can knock you out of the air if you're in the middle of a leap. Shooting them only gets rid of them temporarily and even the explosions can be bumped into stopping your progress.



Another danger that faces the robot are little toadstools of deadly fungi which prove instantly fatal if touched and have to be leapt over. Disappearing floors are another hazard and unless you time your progress across them right it could lead to a long fatal drop, at the end of which the robot's head drops off at his feet.



At first the controls may prove frustrating as you try to combine walking, jumping and flying at the right moments. This can lead to lots of futile bouncing around and death falls as you try to get the hang of things. After some practice though you should be able to get about quite fast. The other crucial thing is to make a map as you go along because otherwise the scenery starts to look all the same and you'll get totally lost.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **256 colourful rooms.**
- **Interesting set of eventually rewarding controls.**
- **Great shooting action.**
- **Platform skills, mapping and arcade adventuring combined.**
- **Every bit as testing as its predecessor.**
- **That lovely Mastertronic price.**

BAD NEWS

- **Controls are immensely frustrating at first.**
- **Not too much puzzling involved.**

GRAPHICS	85%
SONICS	33%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	84%

ACTION TEST

WILLOW PATTERN

Firebird, £3.95, joystick or keys

What a genteel name for a game based on a plate and featuring lots of sword-throwing Samurai. The plate in question is a famous design of a touching tale of oriental romance which you are going to re-enact. The Samurai are Firebird's own contribution to make the handsome young lovers' task in eloping with his beloved princess that much harder.

The story on the plate is that the two lovers have been forbidden to meet by the princess's father, the King. They arrange a secret meeting place under a tree and try to escape across a bridge to a waiting boat. The girl's father chases after them but the gods, in a happy mood, turn them into birds and they fly away.

The main part of the game centres on the boy's attempts to reach the princess through a maze guarded by Samurai warriors. Having found her he has to get to the boat with her while her incensed father pursues you in search of vengeance. The warriors are positioned strategically across sections of the maze, making passage impossible. So you have to kill them using swords that you can hurl at them. The problem is they can also throw swords and you've only got 5 lives.



The warriors stand still, swinging their swords, and sometimes if you get too close they will throw a sword at you. If you can outrun the sword it will fall to the floor and enable the boy to pick it up and throw it himself. Running into the warriors also kills the boy so careful progress is needed. Swords are also found lying around on their own but they all need to be used carefully.

SECOND OPINION

Some of the prettiest graphics I've seen in a long time, accompanied by some the sweetest music I've heard in a long time, more than compensated for the less than demanding gameplay. It's very nice running around mazes, but there wasn't that much to do in there.

PC

The number of warriors and swords are such that you have to cautiously move through the maze only using a sword when necessary and not wasting any of them. Otherwise the boy could be left without a weapon and unable to progress any further through the game.

The other main source of danger is the bridges that sometimes cross the maze paths. When you run onto one of these the view switches from the overview of the maze to a side view of a bridge. Three samurai are crouched on the bridge reaching down to try to grab you as you leap across stepping stones in a river. A bad jump or getting caught will plunge the boy into the river, losing a life.

The princess is located in the inner reaches of the maze and to get to her will take all your skills. On the way gems, fruit and other objects can be picked up and one crucial object that will open up the section of the maze containing the princess. Once the boy has reached her he has to get to a boat on the outside of the maze while the father is chasing him. Get caught and it's all over.

BW



G O O D N E W S

- ▶ **Cute, colourful graphics.**

CAESAR'S TRAVELS

Mirrorsoft, £8.95 cass, keys only

To find good educational software you have to look fairly hard at the classified ads in some magazines or make do with what turns up on the computer store shelves (if anything). For that reason it's good to see a high-profile company like Mirrorsoft catering for the computer users who want to help use the computer as a tool for the whole family.

No-one is pretending that *Travels* is a serious educational program, but what it offers is a novel sort of storybook and reading aid that may provide both enjoyment and some learning. It comes in a very nice package along with a storybook and pictures of Caesar's adventures to colour in. The storybook is more detailed than the game and can be used on its own.

SECOND OPINION

Even though this is a game for 3-9 year olds I rather enjoyed it. I'm not sure what that says about my taste, but I'm not ashamed. Grown ups may find the game play a little on the easy side, and the booklet isn't exactly one of those you just can't put down. But it's a very charming production that younger children should really enjoy.

PC

Both the book and the game take the form of a series of decisions. It starts with Caesar being thrown out of his home and he has to go and find a new one – there's always a happy ending of course. Most courses of action are decided by one of six commands which are run, walk, jump, climb, hide or wait. These are spelt out in greater detail on screen but have been condensed into single key entries.

The game features animated sequences as Caesar goes through his adventures and has some reasonable graphics. The book also has the variable storyline and action choices, achieved by turning to a particular page of the booklet depending on which action is to be taken. There are some reasonable pieces of animation in the game, but nothing very spectacular.



Caesar is trying to steal some sausages. Can you count how many?

Caesar gets himself into a lot of scrapes in many different surroundings. You may find him wandering around a fairground, enjoying the countryside, hiding out in the mountains, helping out firemen at a fire, stowing away on a ship and even going off to live with the Martians.

At certain points in the computer program puzzles have to be solved. These take the form of counting objects, identifying directions and colours. There aren't very many of these tests though and I think a few more would have been good. These puzzles can be attempted until you get them right or you can go back to a previous choice and take a different storyline.

The packaging recommends the game to ages three to nine although the younger group will have trouble with the book and will be better off just using the game with an adult. Nine also seems a little high for the simplicity of the game but suitability depends on the individual child, so you'll have to judge that for yourselves.

BW

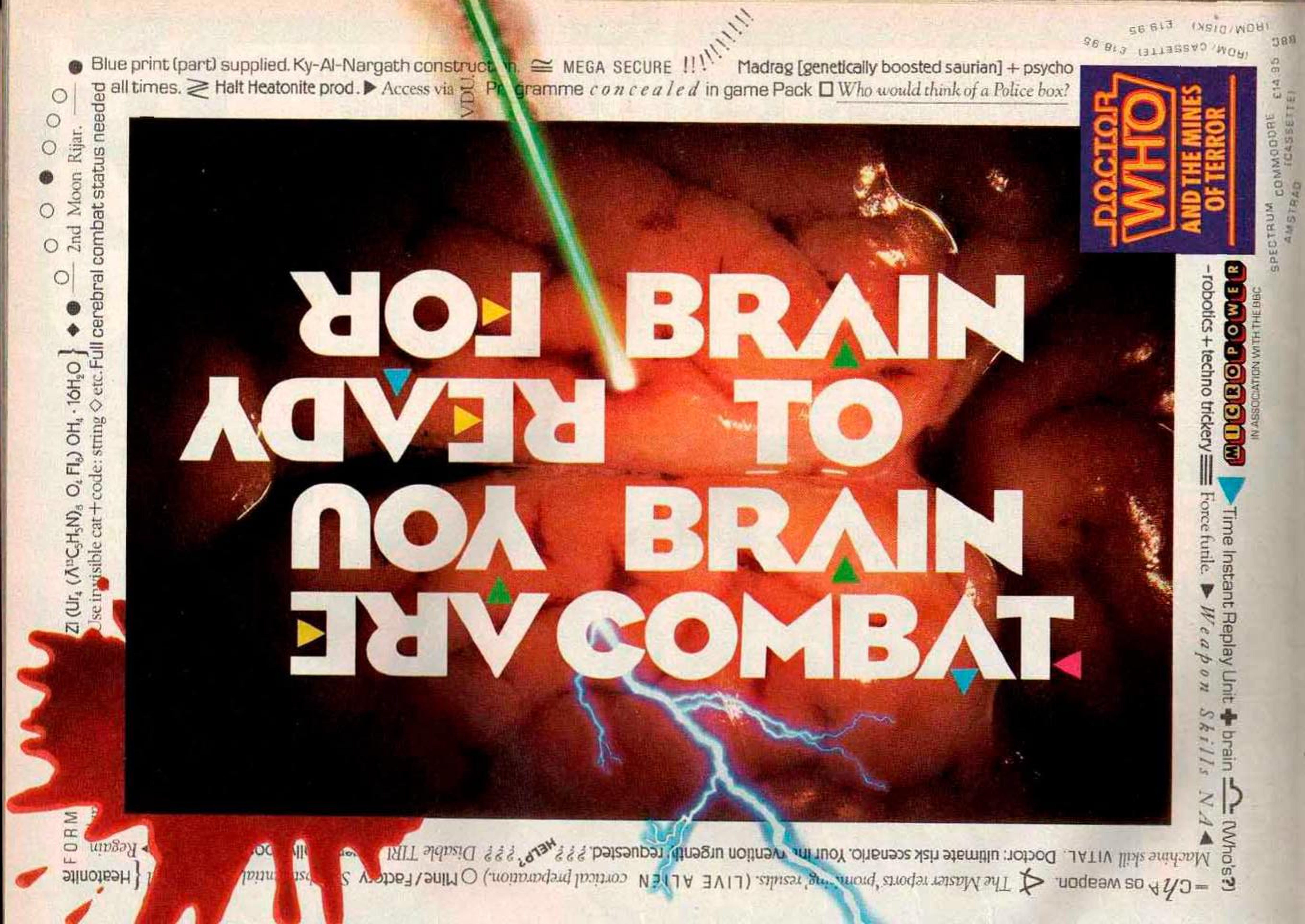
G O O D N E W S

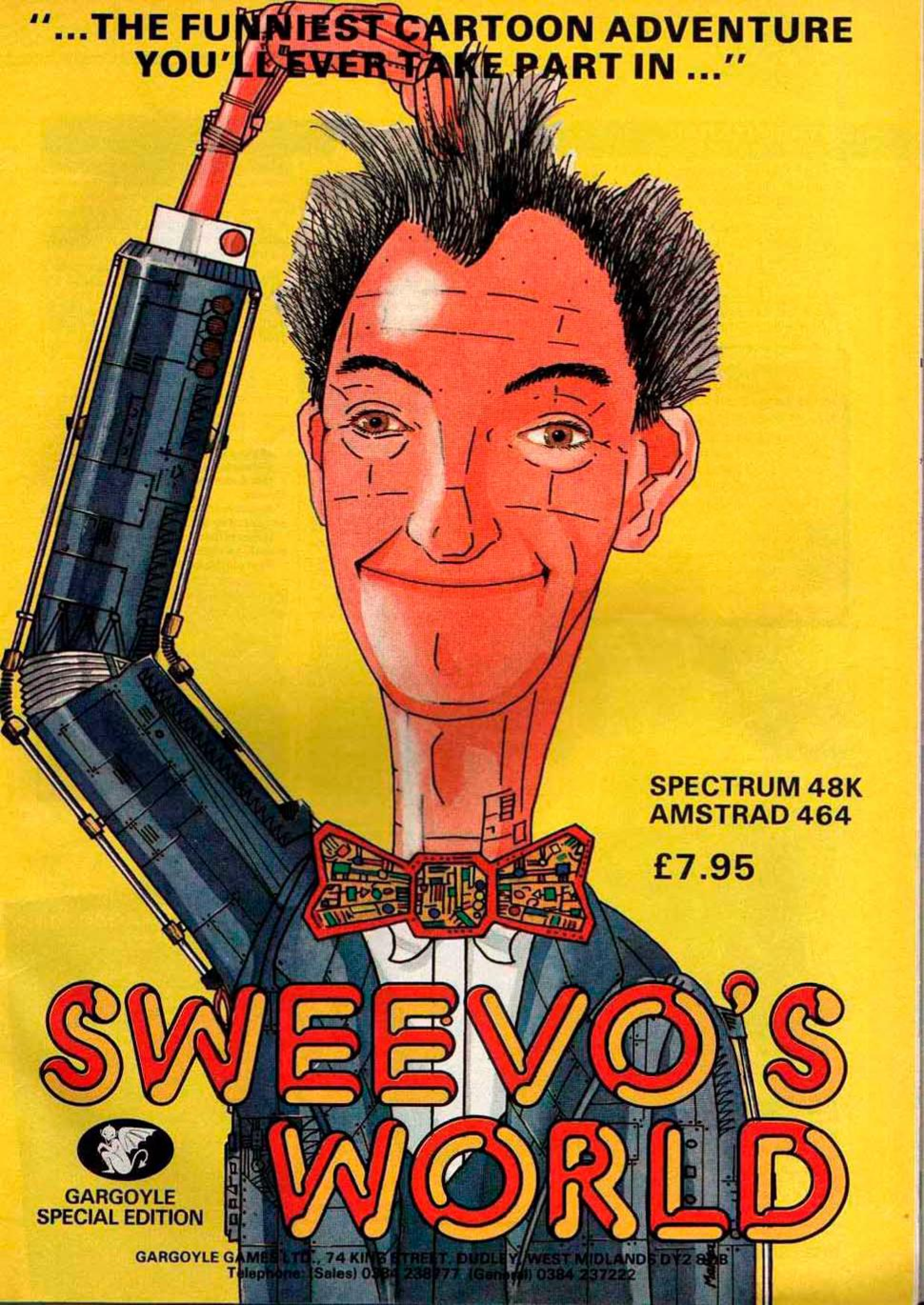
- ▶ **Excellent packaging and storybook.**
- ▶ **Many different storylines.**
- ▶ **Always a happy ending.**
- ▶ **Some nice educational interludes for counting, directions and colours.**

B A D N E W S

- ▶ **Appeal restricted to a limited age group.**
- ▶ **Animation and graphics could have been better.**

GRAPHICS	60%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	N/A
STAYING POWER	N/A
A A RATING	67%


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DYNAMITE DAN

Mirrorsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys



The hero of the title is another plump, lovable computer character involved in a colourful and demanding platform game. His task is to collect eight sticks of dynamite and blow open the safe of the evil Dr Blitzen, get the plans for the Mega-Ray and escape in a zeppelin. The plot may not be credible but the game is terrific.

Dan starts in his zeppelin above Blitzen's 48 screen, clifftop fortress and has to jump down and start dealing with the hordes of dangers that face him. There are lots of non-moving objects that can be picked up for energy, points and different uses but also many moving nasties that lose you a life when run into.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *No, not really a shred of originality to be found in this game. Just excellent graphics, tough gameplay and a challenge that's likely to be long-term. It has to be the best game of its kind so far on the Amstrad.*
>
> *Unlike many other games of this ilk, I didn't find the jumping presented too many problems. What usually got me was the sheer volume and craziness of the Blitzen's guards. Apart from the usual platform-game 'jokes' – such as snapping toilets – there was a host of clever and colourful oppponents.*
>
> PC

Running into the creatures loses Dan one of his ten lives leaving him to continue from that position. But a bigger danger awaits at the bottom of the cliff – the sea. If Dan falls into it the game ends immediately unless he is carrying the right object or lands on the raft that floats across the water. Other long falls can also lose Dan a single life in the same way as running into creatures. The creatures come in a wonderful variety of colourful, well animated types that follow movement patterns vertically or horizontally. Getting past them is all a matter of planning a route and having good timing.

You can move about screen by several methods, the simplest of which are the familiar walking and jumping. Teleports are sometimes found and transport you between two locations. Red trampolines and elastic ropes can be used for bouncing on so that Dan can gain great height straight up or for diagonal leaps across gaps or dangers. When going between screens you must be careful, as they flick to reveal the new one – this can leave you leaping into thin air if you don't know the screen layout. There is even a central lift which is handy for getting between levels, but can be dangerous if you fall down the empty shaft.

As Dan moves about he uses energy which has to be replenished with constant supplies of food. This is found lying about all over the place in the form of cups of tea, ice cream, cake, fruit and other goodies. It isn't replaced, though, thus putting a limit on how long the game can go on.

The dynamite is randomly placed about the playing area although it tends to appear in the same general locations. The other useful objects also appear randomly and have various uses like invulnerability and extra lives. These should help you to your objective which is a safe guarded by Blitzen and containing plans which you have to collect and get back to your zeppelin.

The game is going to be exceptionally difficult to complete with the random elements and sheer overwhelming number of adversaries. However it's a great one for working out routes and timings, just like a good platform game should be.

BW

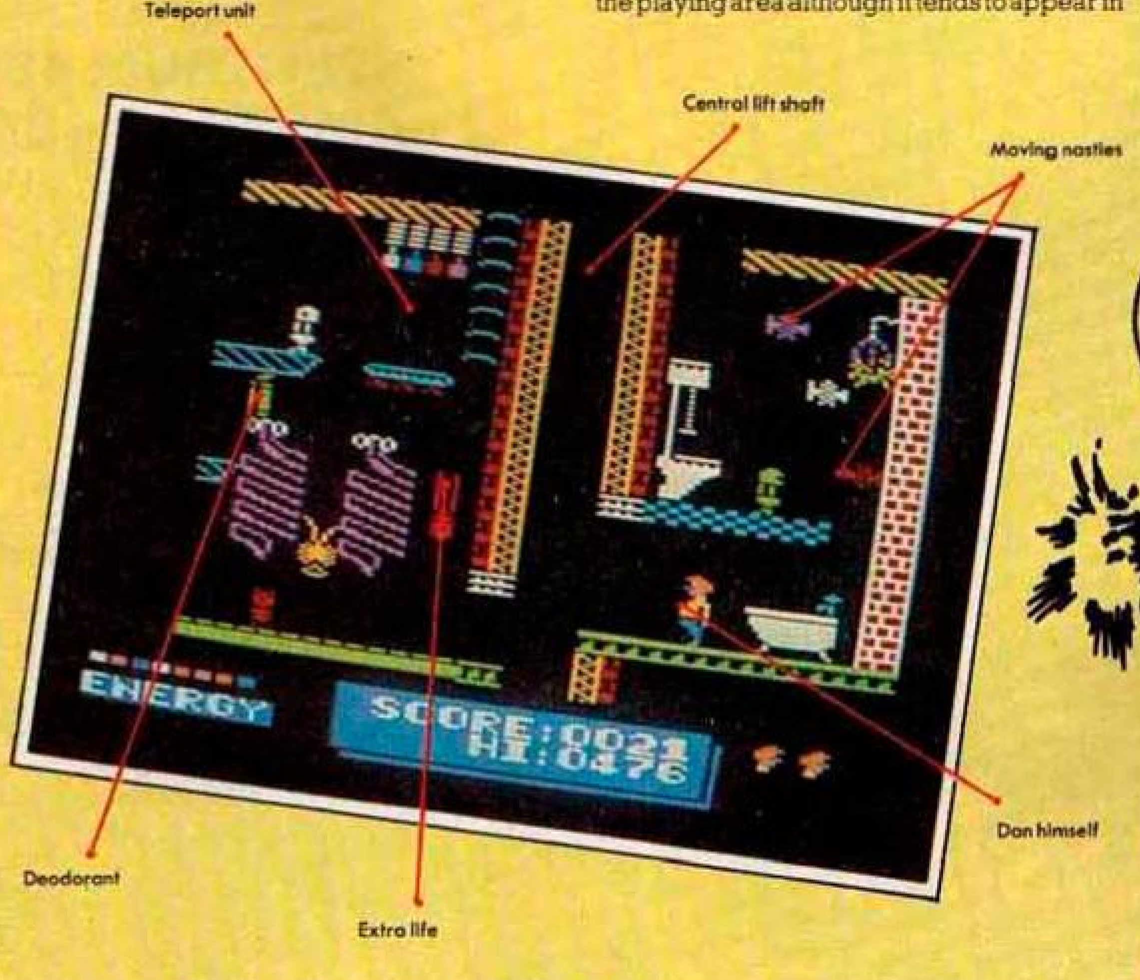
GOOD NEWS

- **48 very tough screens.**
- **Colourful graphics and animation.**
- **Good variety of adversaries and objects.**
- **Random elements and creatures make an addictive but difficult game.**
- **Great music on title screen and ear-pleasing sound effects.**
- **Best platform game I've seen for ages.**

BAD NEWS

- **Not a highly original game type.**
- **Dying in that water can get very frustrating.**

GRAPHICS	90%
SONICS	88%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	91%
A A RATING	90%



The objects and their uses

DYNAMITE: eight sticks used to blow the safe.
TUNING FORKS: these flashing forks give an extra life.
DEODORANT: this gives you a period of immunity in which Dan can touch any nasties without harm.
OXYGEN CANISTER: these precious objects allow you to drop into the water – instead of drowning Dan is returned to his starting place.
FOOD: any sort of food replenishes Dan's energy.
MOVING OBJECTS: if it moves – avoid it. When Dan touches something it disappears but so does one of his lives.
RED LINES AND TRAMPOLINES: when jumped on several times these propel Dan long distances.
TELEPORTS: transport you between two fixed locations. Always the same routes.



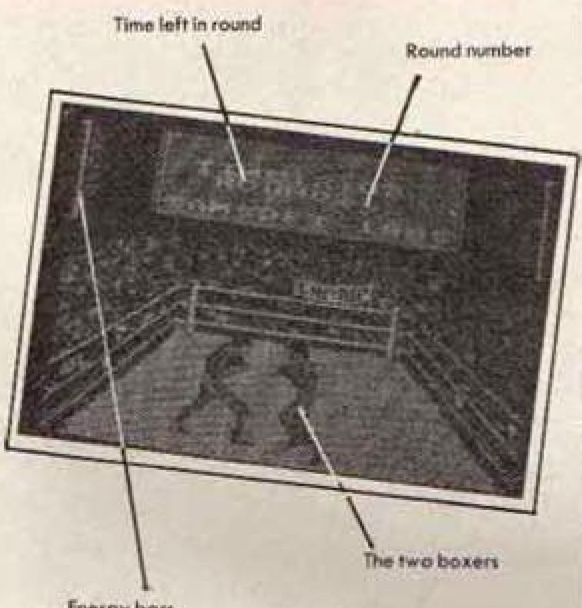
3D BOXING

Amsoft/James Software, £8.95 cass, £13.95 disc, joystick or keys

FB's Boxing and the rather disappointing *Rocco* both showed the action in a boxing ring from behind the boxer's head. This new simulation presents a side view with the boxers able to move around the whole ring.

The task is to defeat six opponents to gain the 'Amsoft Belt'. Each opponent will have slightly different characteristics to the others although they always appear as the same animated character. The ring is shown from an angle above one side and the boxers can move anywhere within it in pursuit of one another.

The blue and red boxers appear from their respective corners at the start of each of up to 15 rounds of action. You can play one or two player games or even watch them fight in demo mode. Each fighter has a number of moves he can perform: left and right jabs to head and body, hooks to head and body, and an uppercut.



If a punch connects with your opponent then it decreases his energy gauge and increases yours. A large number of missed punches can reduce energy as well so accuracy and efficiency are needed. If energy reaches zero then the boxer is knocked out. But resting and dodging the opponent's blows can give a respite in which the energy bar will increase.

A boxer can also find himself on the seat of his pants in the ring from a particularly well timed blow. These can result in knockouts although usually they just draw a count of eight or nine after which the fight continues.

The six boxers are of increasing difficulty to beat. A certain Roland makes an appearance, as well as those two famous fighters from the *Two Tribes* video, Mikhail and Ronald. The last and toughest boxer is Jeff (whoever he is) but the differences between them all are negligible.

The detail on the animation is good although it's sometimes difficult to make out what's going in the close quarter fighting and whose punches are actually landing. The advantage this has over previous boxing games is the fact that you can have a two player game although these are somewhat slower and less spectacular than the deadly strikes in a game like *Fist*.

BW

SECOND OPINION

I was almost ready to throw in the towel before the end of the first round, but my trainer wouldn't let me disgrace myself. So I persevered and slugged it out with the various opponents, although I failed to see any significant difference between them. The graphics give this a victory on points over other fistic games, but it loses by a knockout on gameplay.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- **Two player action.**
- **Detailed fighting graphics.**
- **Variety of punches.**
- **Long 15 round fights possible.**

BAD NEWS

- **Controls are difficult to master.**
- **Impossible to tell when a punch will knock a fighter down.**
- **There's an easy way to beat all six fighters (if you can find it).**

GRAPHICS	71%
SONICS	54%
GRAB FACTOR	71%
STAYING POWER	62%
A A RATING	66%

ARGO NAVIS

Kuma, £6.95 cass, keys only

Wandering the alien-ridden depths of a spaceship you have to find the 12 destruct codes and control rooms that will enable you to destroy the ship. Having set the ship to explode you've also got to get out again.

The ship is 12 levels deep and eight wide making a total of 96 screens. Each one of these is composed of a variety of platforms, stairways, doors and alien hazards. The spacesuited character under your control has to walk and jump his way around the screens trying to maintain his oxygen level and not fall prey to the alien monsters.

The destruct codes are in the form of blue discs which you have to jump to collect. There are also stars and oxygen canisters which can be picked up for points and oxygen respectively. The supply of air is needed to replenish that lost when encountering aliens or falling from platforms.

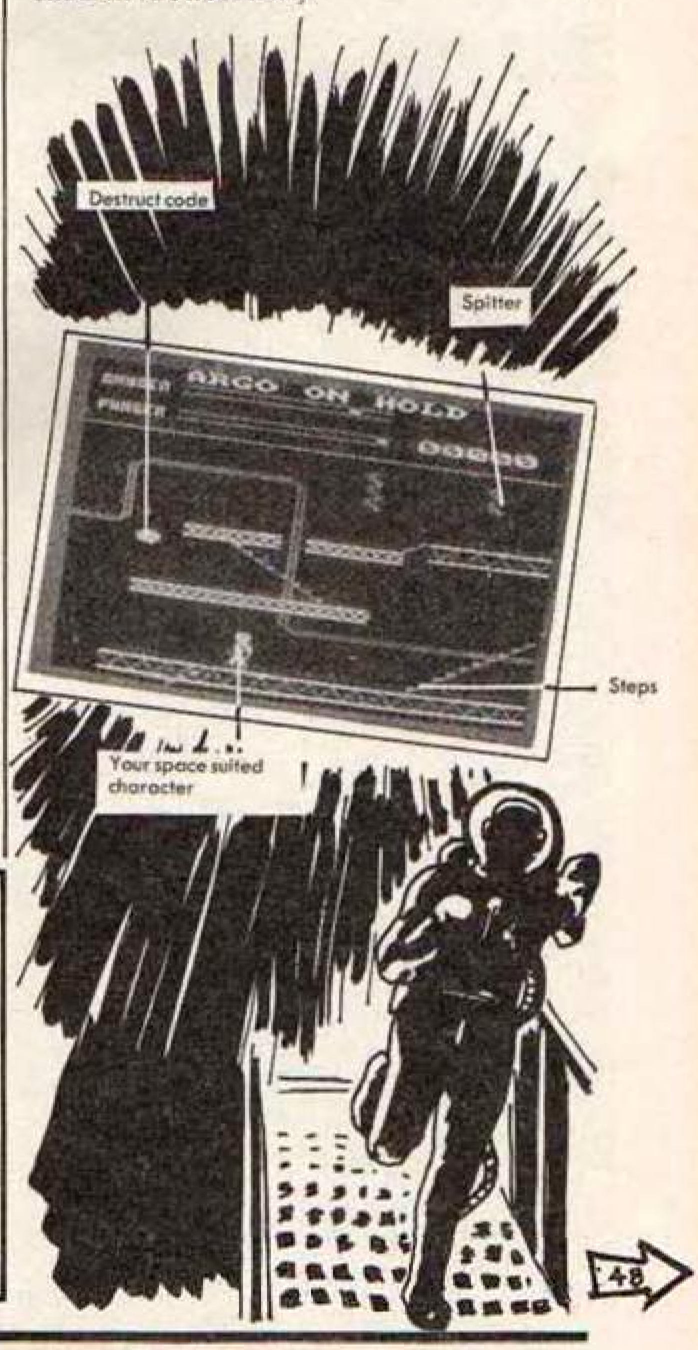
There are lots of dangers to the suit you wear and each one will deplete the oxygen supply until you run out and lose your only life. Robot guards will shoot bullets at you but you can return their fire. Spidery creatures, though, have to be jumped over. 'Spitters' are another problem – they spit out bullets but they can do it at several angles and are often lined up in banks which are hard to get past without injury.

Many of the platforms have doors across them which block your path. Some of these can be slid out of the way using control buttons which you have to jump into but this may block another path. Both movable and immovable doors cause damage if bumped into. The spaceman also has to watch out for long drops since every time he falls he loses oxygen. Sometimes walking off the edge of a platform can be used as a short-cut but it shouldn't be necessary.

SECOND OPINION

This game had its moments, but I found them few and far between. It reminded me of Gremlin's Project Future, reviewed in our last issue – except it's not as good. The best bits, in fact, were the shoot-em-up sequences, where the scrolling out-smoothed anything I've previously seen on the Arnold.

PC



48

One interesting aspect of the game is the firing ports which if walked into take you to a new screen outside the ship where you have to blast an alien ship. The screen scrolls smoothly in all directions while the ship moves into and out of the foreground view. To shoot the ship it has to be centred in the screen and blasted with a phaser. This returns the view to the inside of the ship where you can now pass the firing port.

If you get all the crystals they have to be set to explode in control cabins and then the spaceman has to get out fast. The graphics are fairly simple as are the sound effects but the shoot-em-up sequences are very smooth moving.

BW

G O O D   N E W S

► **Puzzles involving the sliding doors.**
► **Smooth shoot-em-up sequences.**
► **96 screens making a complicated playing area.**

B A D   N E W S

► **Graphics and sound effects are simple.**
► **Gameplay is mostly just running around.**
► **Keys only control can get confusing.**

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	61%

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

Imagine, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Don't be put off by the American sounding title of this game - all it is is good old rounders with a few rule changes. It's the biggest spectator sport in America and this version certainly has an enthusiastic crowd and, with two players, a really competitive atmosphere.

The action all takes place on one screen, a 3D representation of a ball park, although it has a video screen within it for showing the close-up action. The field has a diamond in it with a base at each of the four corners. A pitcher stands in the middle and throws the ball at the batter standing over the 'home plate' or 'fourth base'. The idea is for the batter to hit the ball and get around the diamond back to home plate to score a run.

Each team has nine innings in which to score as many runs as possible, each innings lasting until three players are out. You can be out in a number of ways. If the ball is caught without bouncing then the player is out. He's also out if he's tagged by a player carrying the ball, fails to reach first base before the ball does or has three 'strikes' against him. A strike is when the batter misses a ball although some he can leave if they are too high or too low as they will be illegal. If the pitcher pitches four illegal balls to one batter he automatically goes to first base.

The players can move round the diamond one base at a time on separate hits. If

HI RISE

Bubble Bus, £8.95, joystick or keys

Some games attract you with pretty graphics, others amaze your ears with music but some hook you with pure addictive gameplay. This is a game in similar mould with dozens of tough screens to be negotiated.

Each screen consists of a maze of walkways connected by ladders. The platforms are often on three separate planes although more complicated layouts also appear. The object is to turn the light blue floors white by running over them with a little animated figure. Once all the floor has been changed you can move onto another layout. The layouts are often partially hidden by other platforms so that sometimes you will be working blind with only logic and the noise of the man's footsteps to guide you.

The only things that can stop you completing the task are three other characters who chase about trying to catch the painter, thus removing one of his nine lives. This trio of enemies are intelligent too and can track you down a complicated section of maze and even split up so as to trap you in a corner.

SECOND OPINION

I'm not sure if I want to see my computer opponents displaying 'intelligence'. It makes things very difficult for me. It means the game is very hard. Of course, if you like hard, fast games with umpteen screens and lots of hookability you might like this. But it's too much for me.

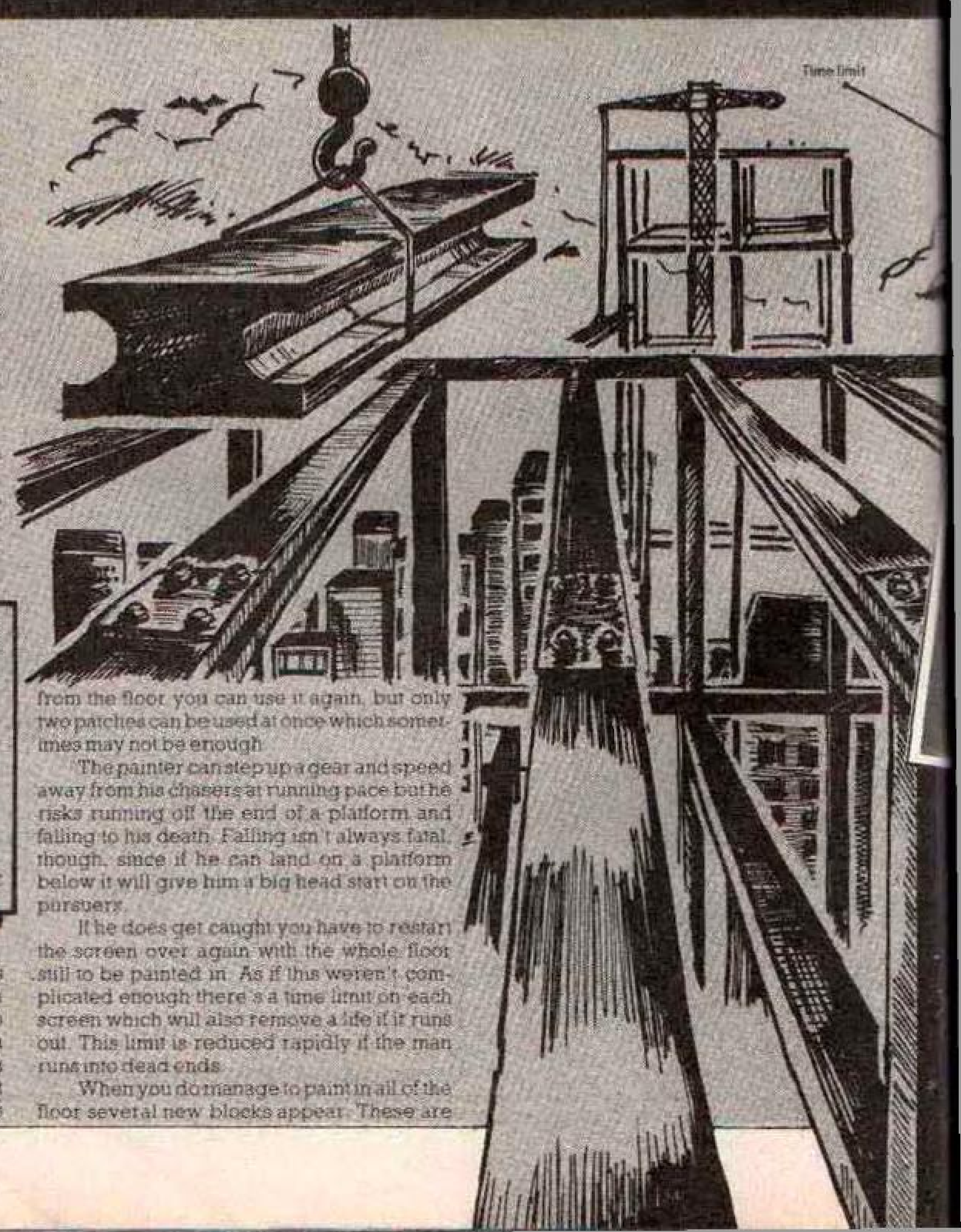
PC

The only defence against these guys is either to stay one step ahead of them, which isn't easy as they don't make mistakes, or to delay them with the two globs of glue you carry. These can be dropped anywhere on the floor and will stick the pursuers to the spot for a short period. Once the glue disappears from the floor you can use it again, but only two patches can be used at once which sometimes may not be enough.

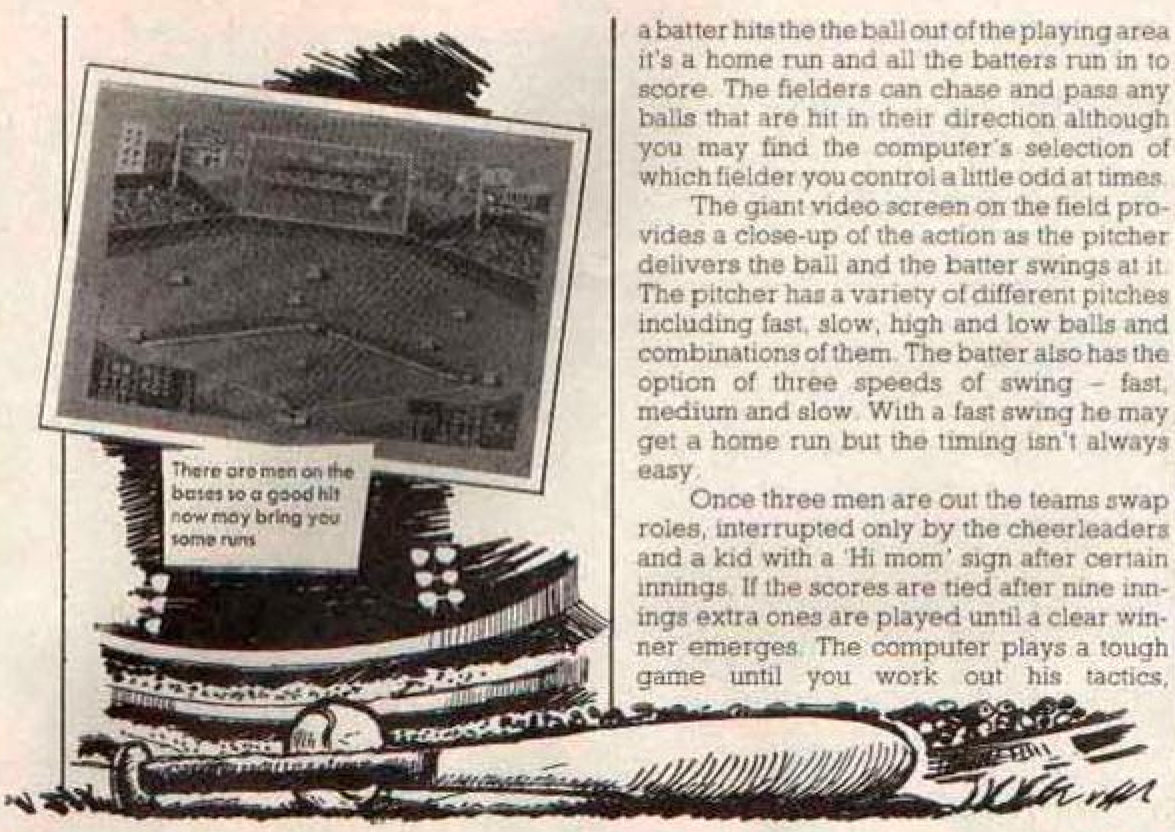
The painter can step up a gear and speed away from his chasers at running pace but he risks running off the end of a platform and falling to his death. Falling isn't always fatal, though, since if he can land on a platform below it will give him a big head start on the pursuers.

If he does get caught you have to restart the screen over again with the whole floor still to be painted in. As if this weren't complicated enough there's a time limit on each screen which will also remove a life if it runs out. This limit is reduced rapidly if the man runs into dead ends.

When you do manage to paint in all of the floor several new blocks appear. These are







There are men on the bases so a good hit now may bring you some runs

a batter hits the the ball out of the playing area it's a home run and all the batters run in to score. The fielders can chase and pass any balls that are hit in their direction although you may find the computer's selection of which fielder you control a little odd at times.

The giant video screen on the field provides a close-up of the action as the pitcher delivers the ball and the batter swings at it. The pitcher has a variety of different pitches including fast, slow, high and low balls and combinations of them. The batter also has the option of three speeds of swing – fast, medium and slow. With a fast swing he may get a home run but the timing isn't always easy.

Once three men are out the teams swap roles, interrupted only by the cheerleaders and a kid with a 'Hi mom' sign after certain innings. If the scores are tied after nine innings extra ones are played until a clear winner emerges. The computer plays a tough game until you work out his tactics, whereupon you can slaughter him. Therefore it's best to play against another person since it provides much more unpredictability and excitement.

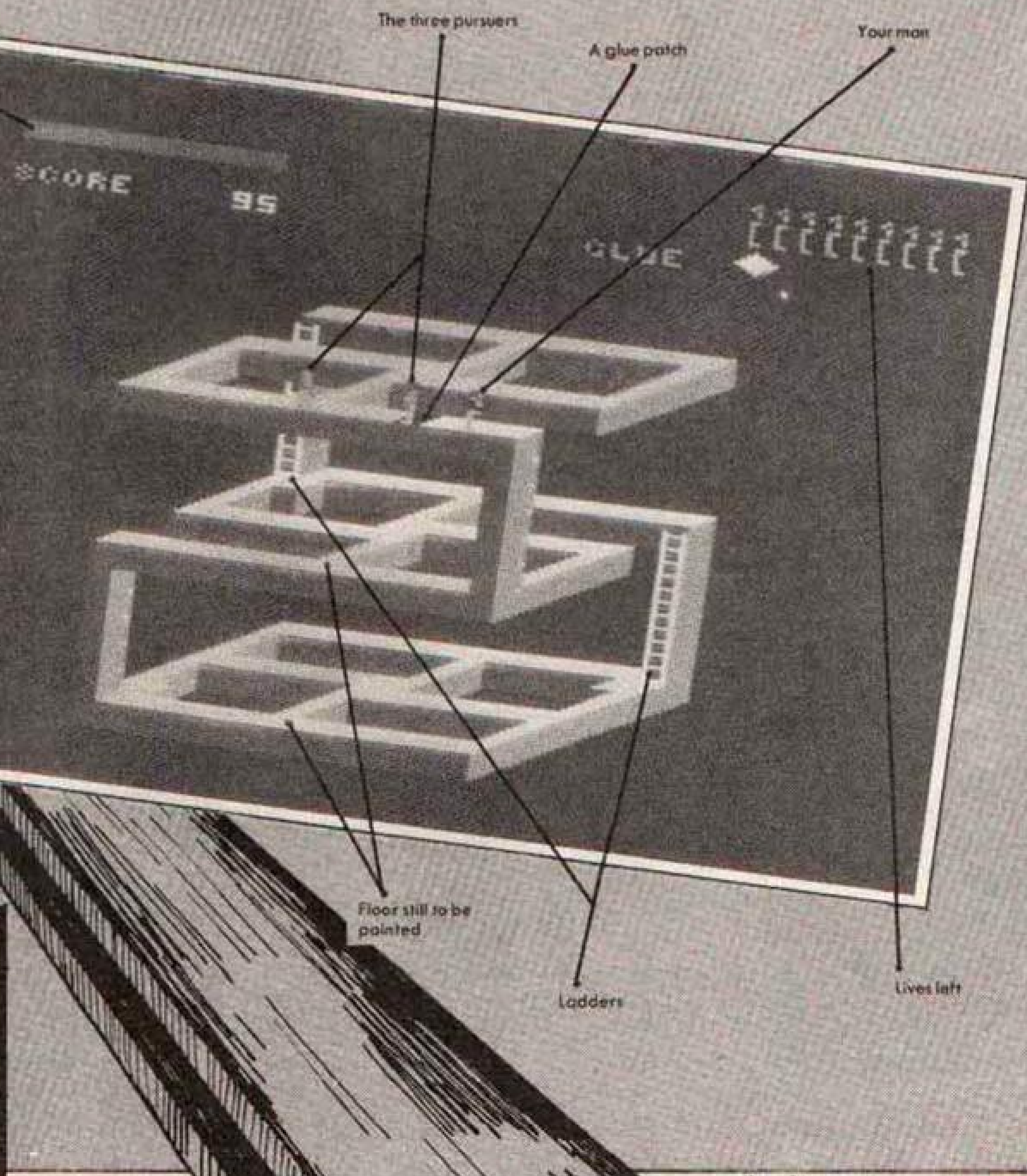
BW

SECOND OPINION

I'm not a baseball fan, but I was quite prepared to enjoy this computer version. However, I didn't really get to first base with this program. The graphics were disappointingly chunky, with the players' heads seeming to consist of little more than baseball caps. It's easy to thrash the computer after a while and althought he two player option can be exciting, there's too much inconsistency in where the ball ends up to make a genuinely satisfying contest.

PC

59



teleport squares which when run into will take you to another screen. There's usually a choice of more than one which will take you to different screens, sometimes back to a screen that may already have been completed. The routes always stay the same and if the man dies on an already completed screen you don't have to do it again.

Our pre-production copy had 55 screens but the finished version should have 90 odd and you can start at any of them. It certainly won't be a game that anyone is going to finish quickly, if ever, because some of the layouts are really mean.

BW

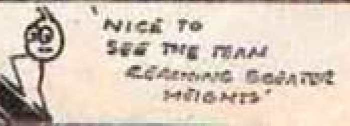
G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ **90 screens.**
- ▶ **Every screen is devilishly difficult to complete.**
- ▶ **Intelligent computer characters make life tough.**
- ▶ **Addictive gameplay that keeps you trying to complete screens.**

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ **Graphics and sound are simple.**
- ▶ **High addiction can also mean a high frustration element.**
- ▶ **Control at junctions and the bottom of ladders can be frustrating when you've an enemy right behind you.**

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	19%
GRAB FACTOR	78%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	73%



ACTION TEST

G O O D N E W S	B A D N E W S
► Exciting two player action. ► Great giant video screen to show action. ► Very playable and easy to control. ► Colourful graphics and animation.	► Player graphics are a bit chunky. ► Ball occasionally appears to get left behind when it's actually been picked up by a fielder. ► The computer is fairly easy to beat.

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	58%
GRAB FACTOR	73%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	71%

SATELLITE WARRIOR

Amsoft/DM Lock, £8.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick or keyboard

The superpowers aren't the only ones with killer satellites – this game revolves around some really murderous bits of space hardware with two rival races battling for supremacy of a planetary system. The game combines tactical and strategic skill with fast action to produce a very original offering.

You can play with two players, or against the computer which plays a very tough game. The game can be played with one or two planets (five or ten moons) the latter choice making for a longer game. The aim is to place a satellite around every moon and wipe out your opponents. You start with a certain amount of cash and supplies for building satellites, the cash being used to purchase more from alien races.

There are three types of alien race each of which sells a different type of equipment. One deals in offensive weaponry, another in defensive systems and the third in base units and motors. At the start of each turn you can bid to for a visit from a particular alien or bid for him NOT to visit you. In this way you hope to get the right tools for your satellite. In later turns you may even have a surplus that you can sell to the aliens.

The eight basic units that can make up a satellite are: the head, toroids, grabbers, missiles, plazma guns, armour, ECM and shields. Satellites must always have a head but everything else is optional. Toroids are the motors that allow you to move the satellite about in a battle but you can have a stationary unit.

Grabbers, plazma guns and missiles are used for close, medium and long range fighting in battles with armour, shields and ECM defending against the three of them respectively. Up to seven units can be placed on a single head but additional heads can be used to create even bigger satellites. Once constructed the unit can be launched to any of the moons.

Each moon will produce particular types of equipment and in different quantities. Thus to begin with competition will be high for the high producing moons or those producing equipment in short supply. The trading and building sequences take place on a screen with two landing pads and the rows of equipment underneath, on launching this switches to a view of the planetary system.

The moons revolve around the planet and a little rocket will appear which you have to guide to your chosen moon before it runs out of fuel. Once there it begins to orbit the moon. More than one satellite can orbit a moon but if they are on opposing sides then a battle to the finish results. This takes place on a screen bare except for two stability indicators and the two satellites.

The two combatants can now manoeuvre and use all their weaponry in trying to destroy the other. Grabbers can be used when the satellites are adjacent to do a lot of damage, plazma guns can be used further away with you guiding the bullets to their target and missiles can be left to home in themselves. Each hit may inflict damage or blow a chunk of the satellite off until one explodes or its stability gauge reaches zero. This leaves the winner to reap the rewards from the moon.

The game turns now repeat until one player has complete control with the aliens giving their view on your performance at the end. Even if you've won this isn't always very complimentary. A very original game with alot of good ideas and plenty to do.

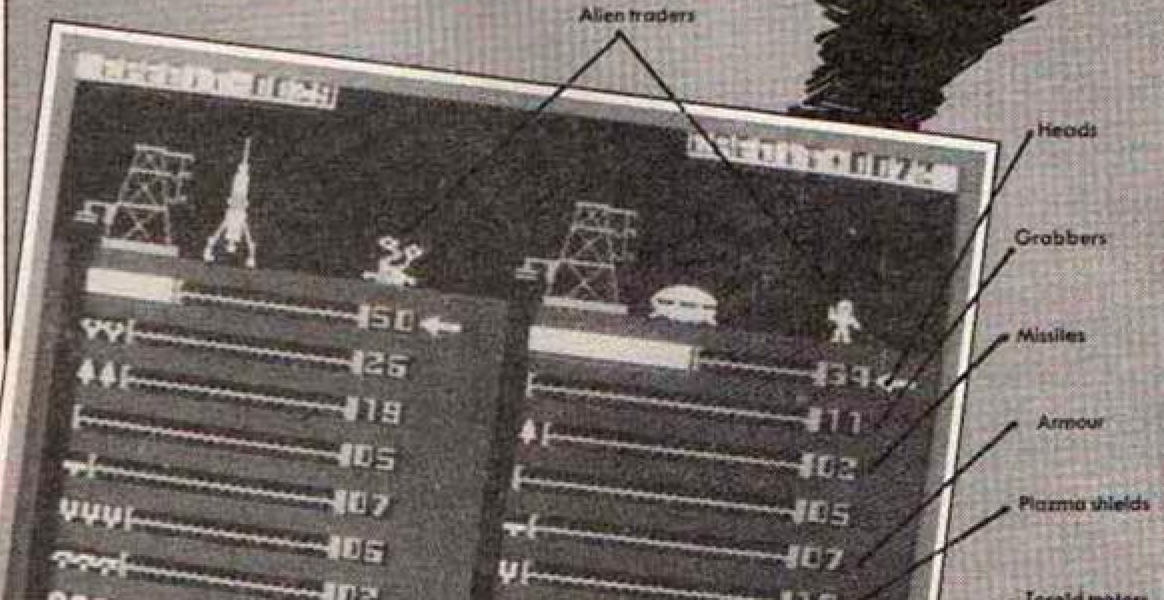
BW

SECOND OPINION

There's a strange charm to this game. Strange, because in retrospect it doesn't seem to have anything that might induce me to have another go. Each separate sequence is pretty unastounding, yet together they made a game that was amusing and challenging. It's not the tops when it comes to graphics or sound, but it's intriguing enough to be worth investigation.

PC





G O O D   N E W S

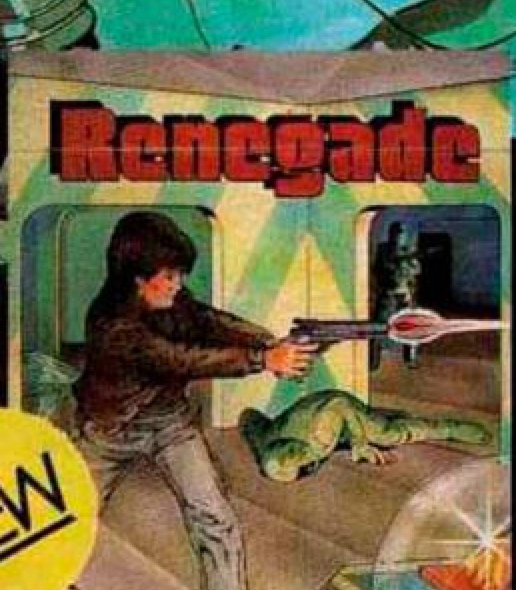
► Lots of originality.
► Good two player action or a tough computer opponent.
► Good mix of strategy and action.
► Plenty to occupy you at all stages of the game.

B A D   N E W S

► Instructions may be confusing at first.
► It takes time to get familiar with the game.

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	78%
STAYING POWER	64%
A A RATING	70%





ARGO NAVIS – Your space ship has been overrun by aliens and your only hope is to collect and set the twelve self-destruct bombs deep in the heart of the vessel. Having set them, you must return to the airlock and escape to safety. Be careful not to damage your space suit (oxygen is precious!), beware of robot guards, 'spitters' and spider-like creatures, who make agile manoeuvring essential! This ship is also under attack from other craft, which must be destroyed before your mission can continue.

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SPY VS SPY

First Star, £9.95 cass, joystick(s) or keys



This novel game features the black and white cartoon spies from the Mad comics doing what they do best - fighting each other. It's a true two player game with a split screen display allowing both spies to operate independently as they try to outwit each other.

The action takes place in an embassy which can be any size from six to 36 rooms. The objective is to find four objects hidden in the embassy, place them in a bag and escape to the airport before time runs out or the other spy does it first. The objects are found by searching the furniture in the rooms but to carry more than one at once you need the bag to put them in. The problem is that the other spy is directly competing with you and will fight you for the objects.

The screen is split into two monitor sections with a camera view on the right and a machine called a 'trapulator' on the right. The camera shows the 3D view of the room the spy is in: if both spies are in the same room only one display is used to show both.

The rooms usually have one or more pieces of furniture in them in the form of cupboards, filing cabinets, pictures on the wall and televisions. The floor is sometimes covered by carpet or a hole by a small rug. These holes can be used for moving between floors as they connect to ladders. Getting between rooms is a simple matter of using the doors, which are sometimes nicely panelled.

The doors can appear on any of the four sides of the room although there is no wall at the front so the door is indicated by a thin strip along the floor. The doors and furniture are the main places where traps can be set for the other spy using the 'trapulator.'

There are two main ways of battling with your opponent. The most simple is to be in the same room where you can smash each other about with sticks until one spy dies. The dead spy flutters off screen as a winged angel (heaven takes all sorts these days) and loses valuable time while the other spy chuckles evilly before racing off again in pursuit of objects. If you have the misfortune to die it costs time and sends the spy back to the starting room.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *How you can expect to go around incognito with a proboscis like this is beyond me. But let that pass. This is a program which captures fully the maniacal humour of the cartoon strip. The split screen display provides some frantic fun in both one and two player mode. Animation is excellent and the potential playing area should satisfy the most demanding of moles.*
>
> **PC**

The other, and more satisfying, way of killing your opponent is by setting booby traps for him. These are accessed using the trapulator and can be planted in furniture, on doors or just out in the open. If a spy is unfortunate enough to search a booby trapped piece of furniture or open a rigged door then once again he will die gruesomly, lose time and leave the other spy nearly dying of laughter.



The traps can be stopped using various objects found in specific pieces of furniture but you need to know which object removes which trap and which trap is where - not easy. The only way to know is to try to keep an eye on what the spy is doing on the other display while still trying to do things yourself.

The spies are aided by a map on the trapulator showing the level of the embassy they are on and where an object is. The game can be played against the computer or another player, the former being a real test of skill and the latter a tremendously exciting battle of wits.

The game ends either when both spies run out of time or when one succeeds in getting to the airport with all the objects (he dies if he hasn't got them all) whereupon he flies off in his plane and obtains a ranking like 'average guy spy' or 'small fry spy' depending on how well you've done.

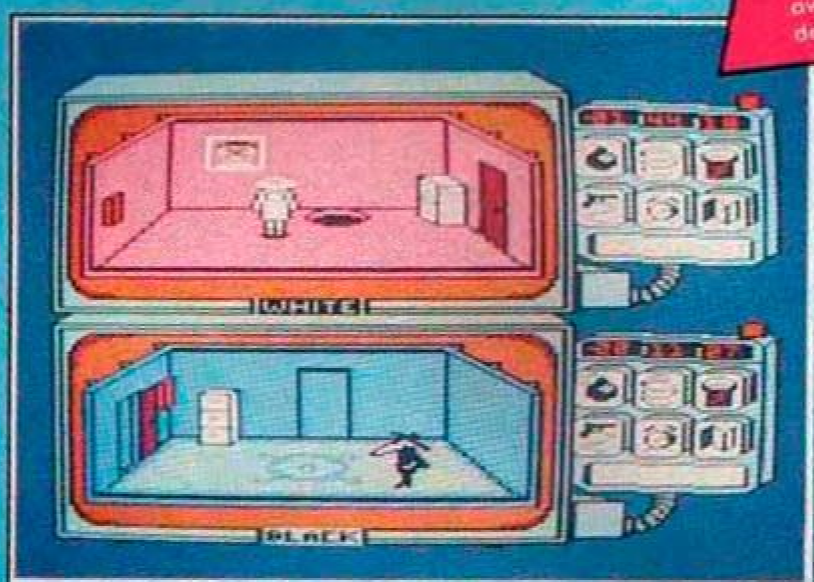
BW



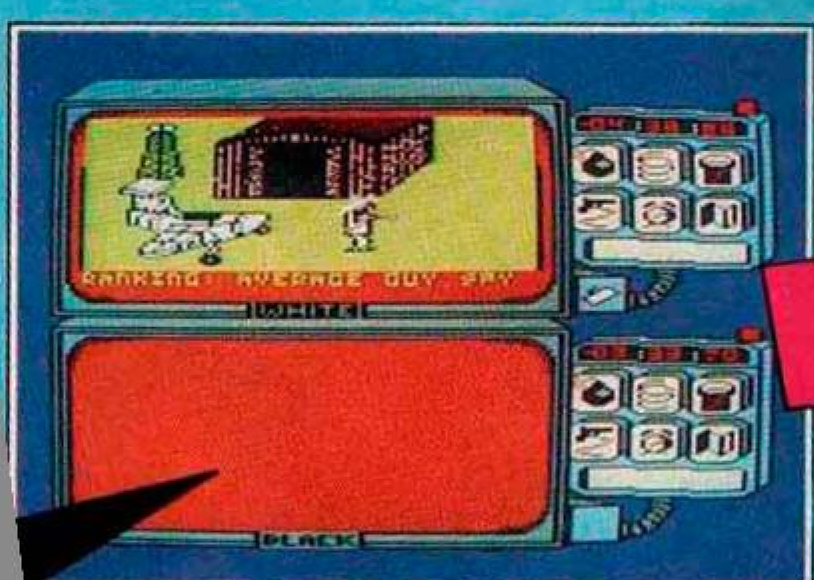




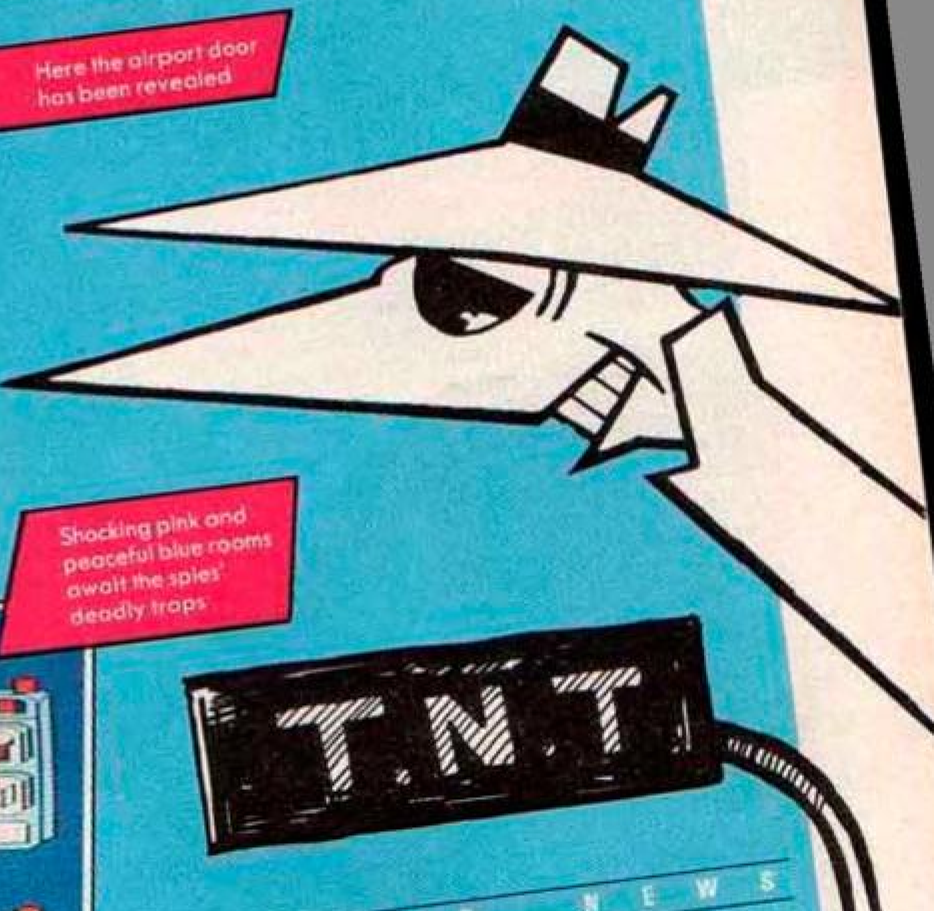
Here the airport door has been revealed



Shocking pink and peaceful blue rooms await the spies' deadly traps



The victorious white spy chuckles madly as he heads for his plane.



T.N.T.

GOOD NEWS

- Excellent graphics and animation.
- Good title tune and sound effects.
- Compulsive two player action.
- A tough computer opponent.
- Traps are a marvellously original idea.
- Great sense of humour.

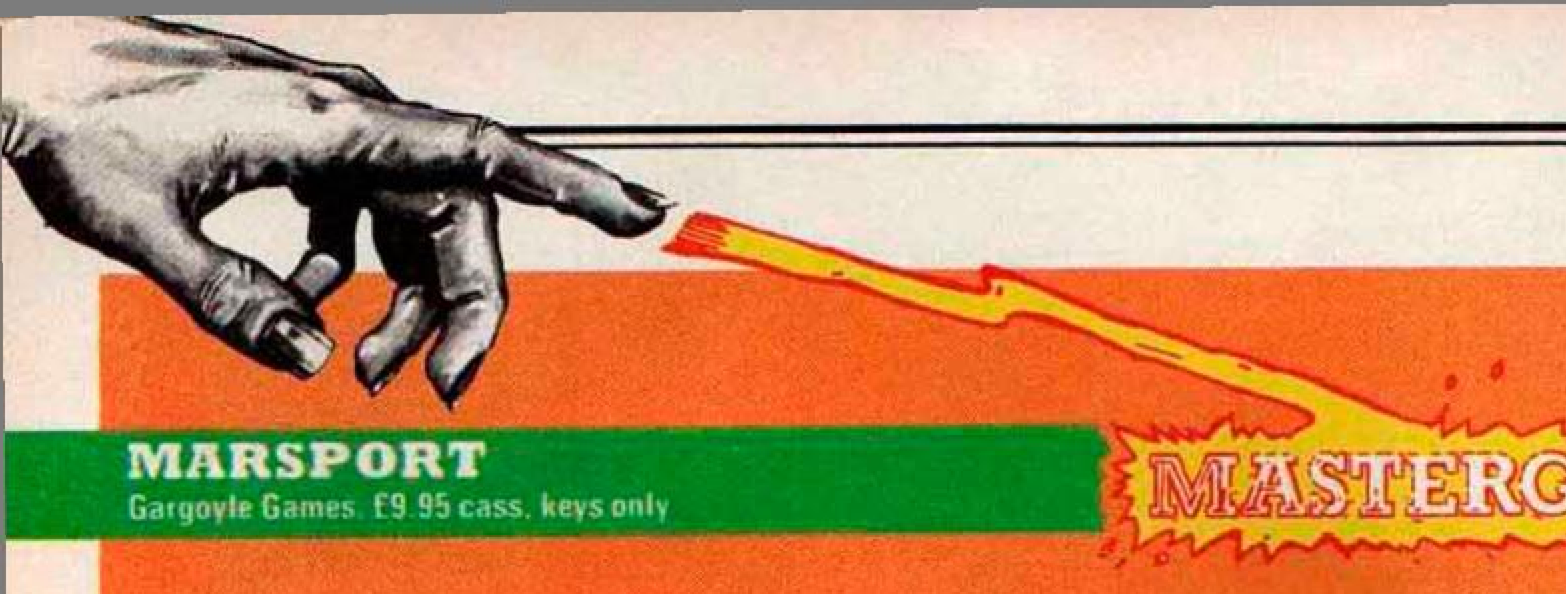
BAD NEWS

- Traps and depth of game may not be immediately appreciated.
- Sometimes difficult to position spies accurately.

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	74%
GRAB FACTOR	91%
STAYING POWER	90%
A A RATING	90%

Traps and Cures

BOMB: can be placed in furniture but is disabled by a SAND BUCKET.
WATER BUCKET: is placed over doors and electrocutes unlucky opener. Can be disabled by an UMBRELLA.
GUN AND STRING: string is attached between a piece of furniture and a door so that opening the door triggers the gun. Carrying SCISSORS snips the string.
SPRING: can be placed in furniture and bounces the discoverer against the wall. The WIRECUTTERS will cut through the spring to stop it.
TIME BOMB: there is no remedy for this one and you just have to get out of the room before it goes off. Can be planted anywhere in the room.



MARSPORT

Gargoyle Games, £9.95 cass, keys only

MASTERGAME

From the mystical lands of celtic legend Gargoyle have leaped a few thousand years into the future to an Earth under siege from alien threat. Your task as the space-suited John Marsh – no greasy Cuchulainnish hair – is to begin the counter-attack against the alien Sept in the occupied Marsport base.

The base holds the key to mankind's survival in the form of plans that will enable a strengthening of the force field protecting Earth and the moon. The plans are hidden within the 10 levels of Marsport which is infested with the insectoid Sept and defended by M-Central, the computer installed to run the city and defend the plans against the Sept.

The game format is basically the same as *Dun Darach* but it takes place in a futuristic setting and presents the player with totally new problems. The screen is split into two sections with the top half showing John Marsh as he wanders around the various base levels and the bottom section providing information on status. Marsh is much more agile than Cuchulainn from *DD*, walking in a more upright, nimble-footed manner.

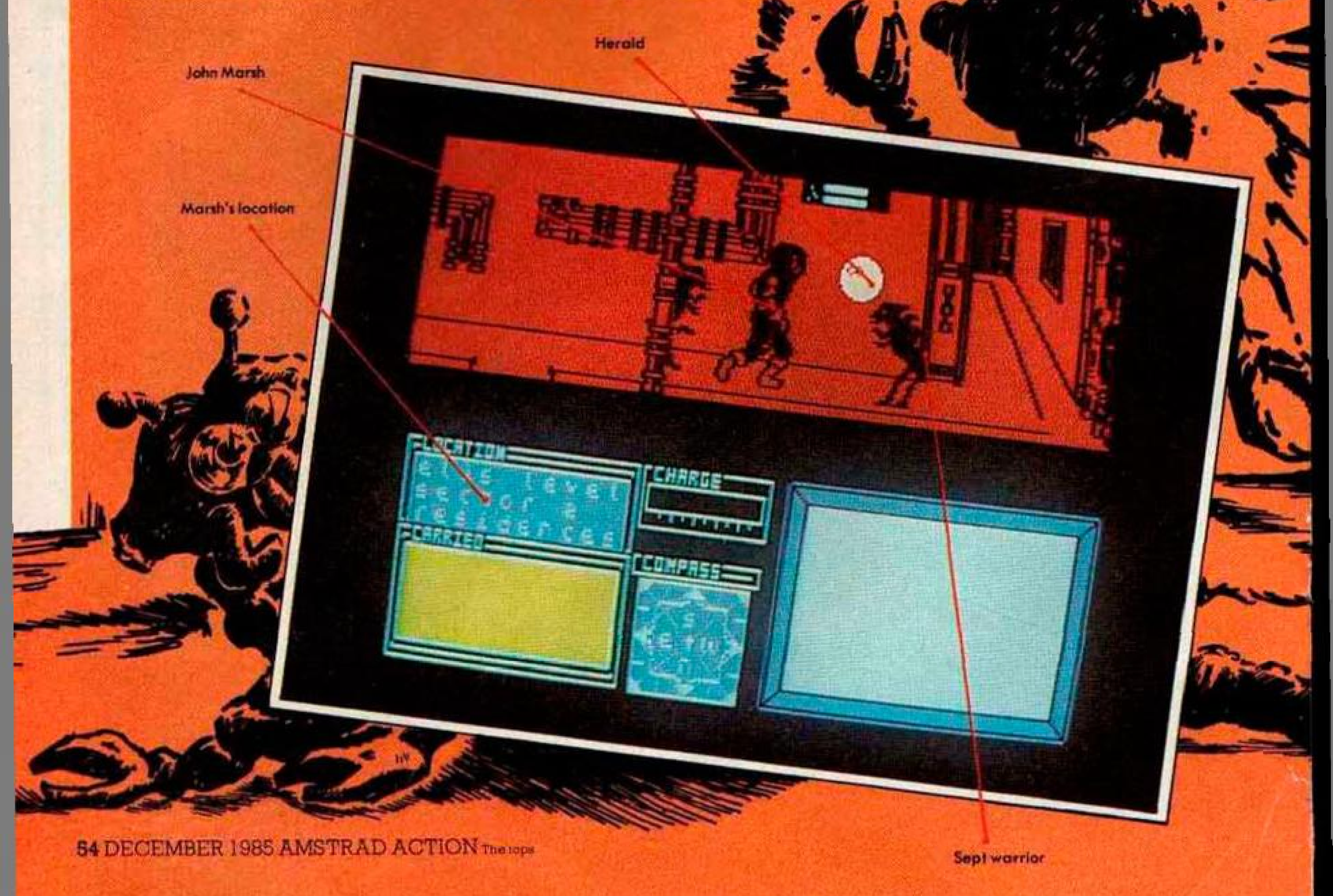
As you move down corridors the view can be switched through four camera angles at 90 degrees to each other so that both sides of the corridor can be looked at by changing cameras. Every now and then a junction will be encountered which can be turned into by switching views appropriately. So now you know how to move about you will want to know what to do next.

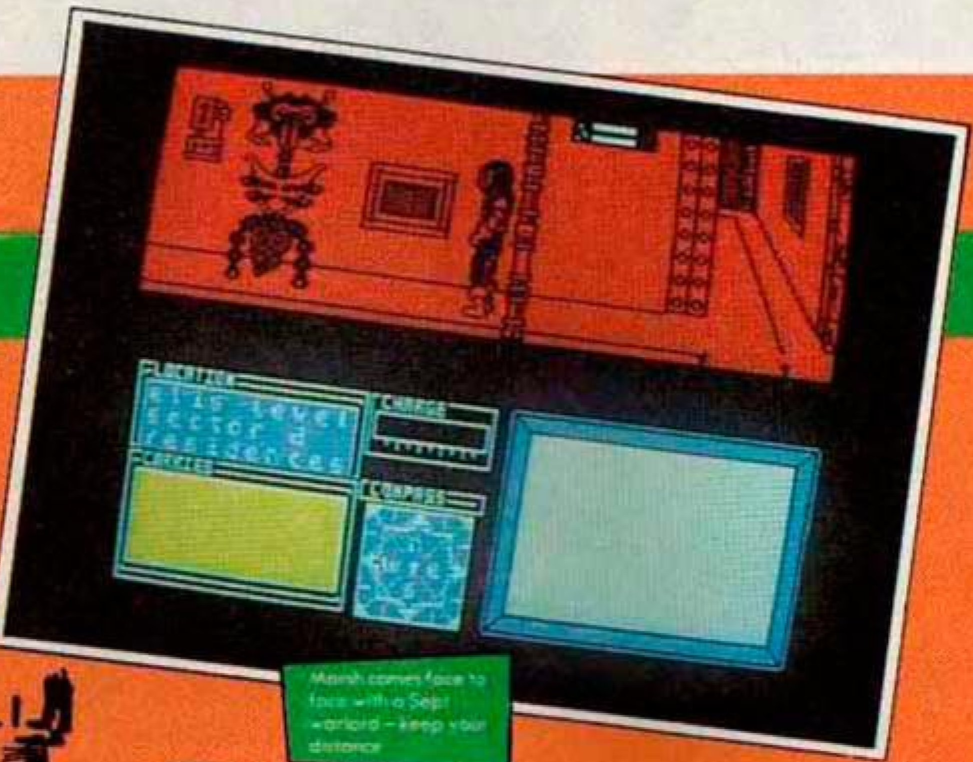
Most of the action involves various wall units, doors and aliens which have to be used, opened and killed respectively. Of course it isn't that simple because there's the usual mass of objects with a complicated chain of events and actions needed for completing tasks. One of the earliest jobs is to arm yourself with a weapon. That's right, folks – this Gargoyle game features shooting, blasting, zapping, or in other words alien killing.

The gun isn't that easy to get because it involves using two of the lifts to get to it and a gun permit to open its wall unit. Once found you never lose it even if you die. It has to be charged every so often to keep those puffs of fire popping out, putting an end to the Sept warriors that patrol some locations. These things are small spiky insects which are deadly when run into.

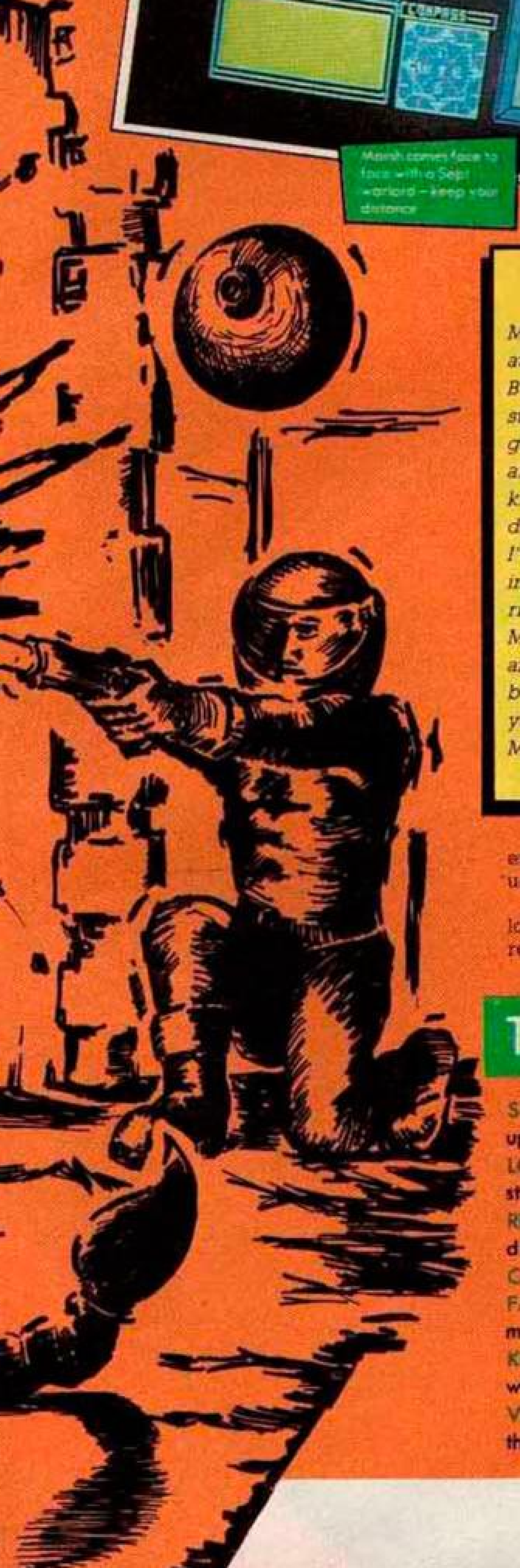
Other objects include water, flour and charcoal but what you do with them I don't know yet, but I strongly suspect they can make something that can deal with 'Warlords'. These are a much nastier proposition although they can't move around. They are large beasts with clicking jaws, wiggling feet and menacing abdomen – not a pretty sight. Get too close and a large, curly sting whips out of the abdomen and in gruesome fashion lets you have it – a sight which made my skin crawl. These multi-legged monsters are impervious to ordinary fire power and as yet I don't know how to destroy them.

There are eight types of wall unit which perform different functions, mostly helpful to you. These are the main source of objects and where they need to be used to complete tasks. Fortunately their uses are explained





Marsh comes face to face with a Sept warlord – keep your distance



wall units. The instructions are wonderfully atmospheric with Gargoyle's vivid imagination put to work again. A background to the events (and even a future) is provided along with a chronology of events, playing instructions and a recommended reading list.

This is definitely not a game to be missed since it has all the succesful elements of *DD* and a few more besides. I just can't wait for the other two in the Siege of Earth trilogy.

BW

SECOND OPINION

My heart was about to sink when I saw what, at first sight, looked like a Dun Darach *clone. But it soon became clear that this was a great step forward for Gargoyle, if not quite a giant leap for humanity. The vertical arrangement of Marsport means a different kind of problem in reaching new areas. The different wall units are perplexing, while I've yet to find out how to mix the ingredients on offer and come up with the right mixture. It's heartening to see that John Marsh walks rather better than Cuchulainn, and great to be able to shoot those revolting bugs. The only drawback I foresee is that you might need the cartographic skills of a Mercator to map this one out.*

PC

enough in the instruction manual to be easily used once you're in the game.

The bottom of the display shows your location, compass direction, inventory and a readout from any messages received from

GOOD NEWS

- **Fantastic animation.**
- **Great background graphics and flesh-creeping aliens.**
- **Devious tasks requiring plenty of puzzling.**
- **Large playing area.**
- **Excellent atmospheric instructions.**
- **Shooting action as well as adventure problems.**

BAD NEWS

- **The keyboard controls can be confusing.**
- **Can be frustrating if you get really stuck.**

GRAPHICS	97%
SONICS	11%
GRAB FACTOR	94%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	95%

The Eight Wall Units

SUPPLY UNITS: these provide objects which can be picked up. Each unit provides a limitless supply of one object.

LOCKERS: If you have too many objects to carry you can store some in lockers to come back for later.

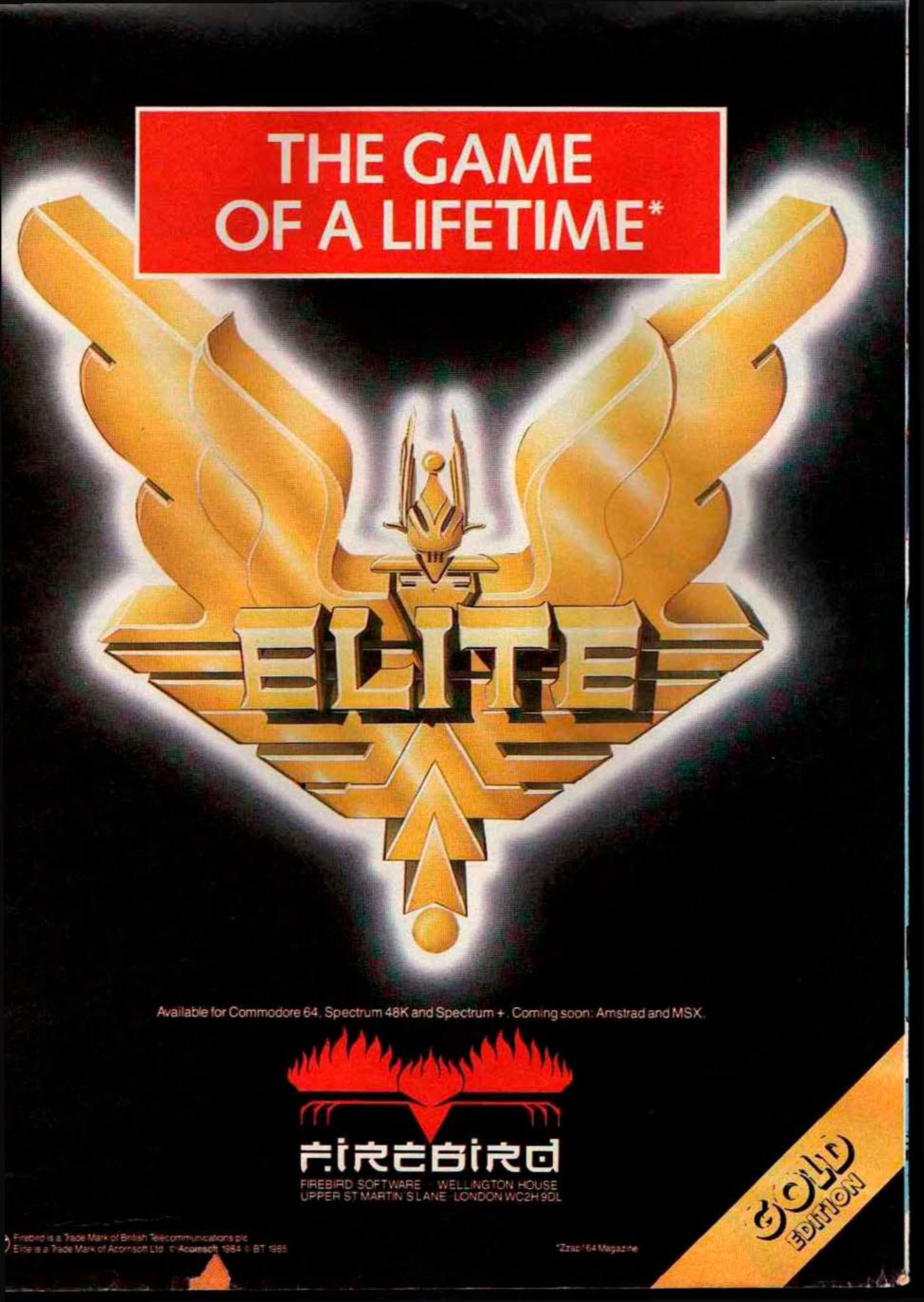
REFUSE UNITS: there are lots of these. Use them to dispose of unwanted objects.

CHARGE UNITS: used for charging up the weapon.

FACTOR UNITS: these can combine two or more objects to make something new.

KEY STATIONS: when the right object is placed in here it will unlock another unit or door.

VIDTEX: these provide information which is displayed in the bottom half of the display.



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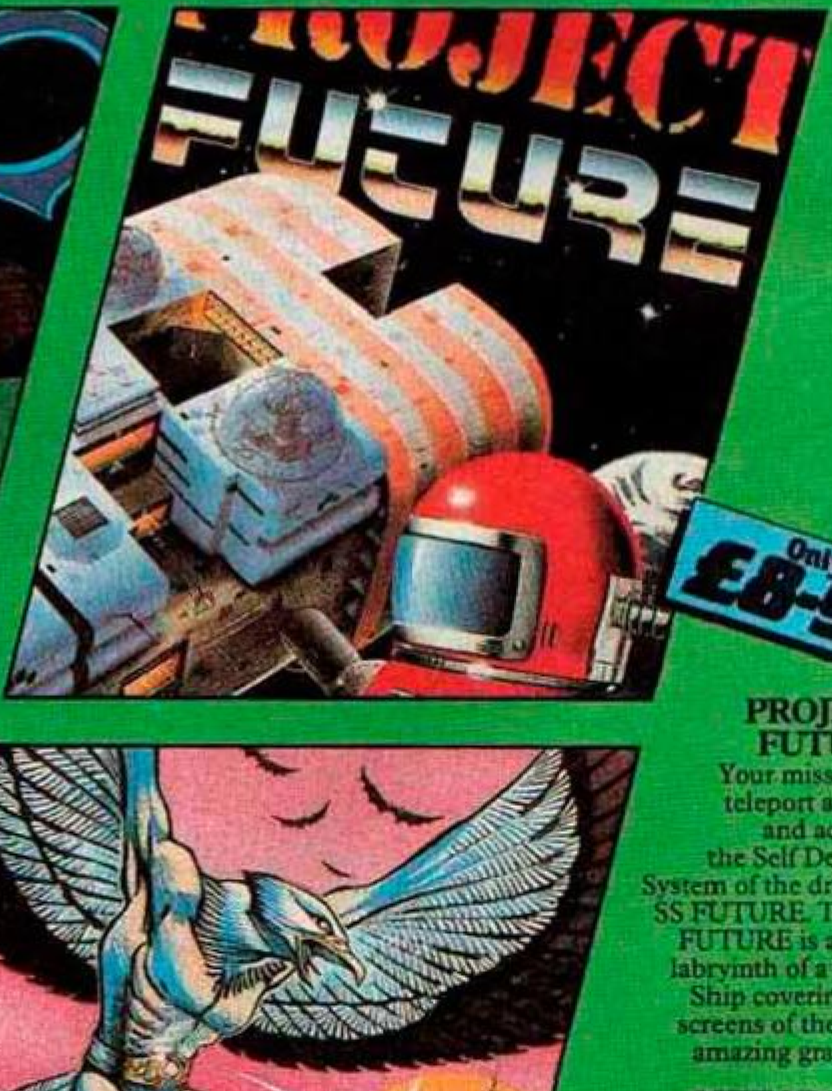


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FROM 42

- Excellent oriental music throughout the game.
- A tough task calling for economy in the use of swords.
- Nice price for a good little game.
- Good tie in with the famous old story.

B A D N E W S

- Not too much puzzling – just a lot of running around.
- One wasted sword could ruin a long game.

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	84%
GRAB FACTOR	79%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	76%

DON'T PANIC

Firebird, £3.95 cass, joystick or keys

Naturally the whole idea of the game is to MAKE you panic and the infuriatingly, mad-enningly, eyeball twitchingly difficult task may wreck a few joysticks, computers, homes and marriages. It all sounds easy enough: return a load of radioactive teddy bears to your spaceship without getting caught by a big, green, bouncy monster – but it will drive you crazy.

The screen consists of four levels of walkway which scroll as the spaceman you control walks along them. The walkways wrap around after several screens and at one point there is a gap in all four where your rocket stands. Sitting about at various points are teddy bears which are yellow and deadly to the touch. These first have to be shot with the laser you carry to make them harmless to the touch and then pushed along with the laser to the ship.

At several points along the platforms are a series of blocks which serve as lifts allowing you to move up or down floors to get at teddy bears. As the rocket fills up it moves up a walkway until with all the teddy bears inside you finish. You can only walk across the gap at the level of the rocket's base though – any-where else and one of the six lives is lost.

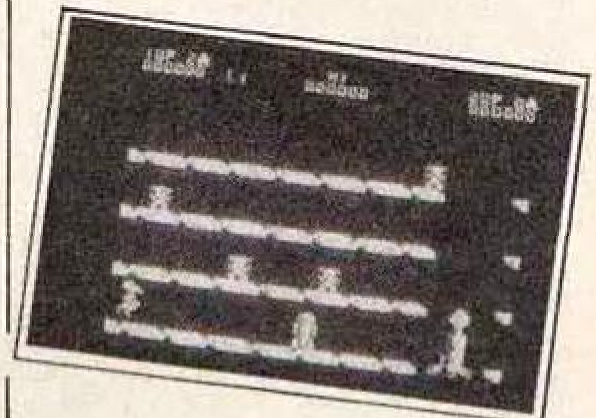
Up to now there hasn't been to much to panic about but the green monster is what changes all that. He appears at the start of the game and hops along the walkways like a Martian kangaroo in pursuit of you. He can change platforms and unfortunately he travels faster than you. Therefore the space-man relies on his wits to outsmart him with frequent changes of level – the monster only does one at a time, and direction.

The monster also has a little, green frog as a sidekick who hops up and down the top walkway making escape from big, slimy bro-

SECOND OPINION

They must be joking. Don't Panic, indeed. This is one game where if you don't get your joystick in a twist it just isn't worth playing. The idea is simple and there's not much in the way of variety, although what graphics there are, are very good. The interest, of course, lies in the frenentic gameplay – and that's quite something. When you want to put a bit of excitement into your otherwise mundane existence you could do much worse than load up this game.

PC



FORMULA ONE SIMULATOR

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick only

Racing games have suddenly taken off on Arnold with two releases in one month simulating formula one racing. This cheapo offering has ten tracks to choose from and follows the *Pole Position* format of having to race a qualifying lap before going into the race proper.

The ten tracks are Silverstone, Brands Hatch, Monaco, Hockenheim, Osterreichr-ing, Kyalami, Zolder, Paul Ricard, Monza and Zandvoort. Each one has a different layout of straights and curves. Having selected the track you can select automatic or manual gear changes and are told what the weather conditions are like.

The racing screen appears with a view from your car's cockpit of the track ahead. On the top of the display is a status line telling you your speed, rpm, gear, time, position and lap. Your first task is to make a practice lap of the track with your time determining the car's position on the race grid.

You can accelerate, decelerate and change gear while trying to negotiate the bends in the circuit. If you drift too wide on a corner (or steer badly on a straight) and run into the grass the car crashes and you'll have to start all over again.

Having qualified you're put on the grid with eight other cars and have to battle it out around the circuit. This is where another fea-ture on the car comes in handy – the wing mirrors. These warn you of any traffic behind while cars may loom in front that have to be passed without crashing into them.

The car has five gears although you'll need some long, straight stretches to get into fifth at about 150 mph and over. The max-imum speed depends on the type of circuit and weather conditions, with some needing lots of braking and light cornering while others can be blasted round with the engine at full stretch. When cornering hard the wheels will make a protesting squeal to let you know you're on the limit.

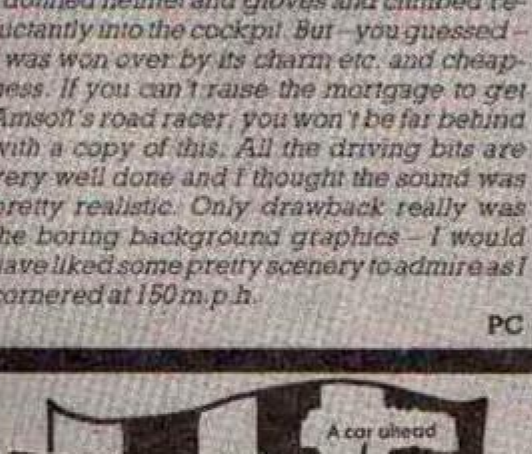
If you crash in the race proper you're given your fastest lap time so that you can keep a record of best times for each circuit. The graphics and sound aren't as good as *3D Grand Prix* with less detail and colour, the other cars in particular moving jerkily. It's not as good as the Amsoft offering but it is a lot cheaper and still provides a tough challenge to those hungry for tarmac action.

BW

SECOND OPINION

*Not **another** motor racing game, I groaned as I donned helmet and gloves and climbed re-luctantly into the cockpit. But – you guessed – I was won over by its charm etc. and cheap-ness. If you can't raise the mortgage to get Amsoft's road racer, you won't be far behind with a copy of this. All the driving bits are very well done and I thought the sound was pretty realistic. Only drawback really was the boring background graphics – I would have liked some pretty scenery to admire as I cornered at 150 m.p.h.*

PC



G O O D N E W S

- Ten different circuits.
- Practice and full race driving.
- Difficult tracks and opponents.
- A lot cheaper than *3D Grand Prix*.

B A D N E W S

- Not as good as *3D Grand Prix*.
- Car graphics are not impressive.
- Left/right controls are insensitive.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	63%
GRAB FACTOR	70%
STAYING POWER	74%
A A RATING	73%



CAULDRON

Palace Software, £8.99 cass, joystick only

A combination of a shoot-em-up and a platform game is a very attractive proposition – this is just such an effort, combining *Defender*-style surface action with underground cavern platform screens. The 'star' is a broomstick-toting hag who goes off in search of six ingredients for her cauldron to enable her to get the golden broomstick from the Pumpkin.

The game is composed of 62 screens on the surface of a planet which wrap around to form a circle, and 64 underground rooms where the six ingredients are found. On the surface the hag can fly her broomstick or walk on the ground, both having their advantages and disadvantages. She is powered by magic and has ten lives to complete the quest.

You begin at her cottage, where the ingredients must be returned, and emerge into a woodland scene where bats are flying around. If she walks along to a clearing she can take off and fly her broomstick, which is faster and less dangerous than walking. The scenery changes on some screens, as do the dangers that try to hit her and sap the magic. Bats in woodland, ghosts in the graveyard, gulls over sea, lava balls over volcanoes and killer plants over hills all home in on her.

These can be shot with magic if you are flying but running out of magic, crashing into the ground or trying to take off when not in a clearing will lose a life. Magic can be replenished at many points where there is a sprkling area of dust. There are also keys found on the ground and these unlock the five surface doors to the caverns. The hag has to have a key and land before walking into one of the doorways.

Control changes to good ol' left, right and jump in some very testing platform screens. There are lots of rocky platforms about and, depending on the area, floors, tables, walls, deadly lava floors and of course hordes of nasties. These sap magic as before and are alot tougher to avoid on your route although they do follow regular movement patterns.

Magic refuelling points appear again but the greatest danger is from falling too far or jumping onto a lava floor which immediately loses a life. This is made harder by the flick screens which often have you jumping into the unknown so that until mapped you have to guess where a platform will be. After a few games this shouldn't be too annoying though.

The deadly objects take the form of bats, lava balls, snapping plants, skulls, bones and your arch-enemy the pumpkin. The six objects you need are all flashing and sometimes seem so close but you have to go round half a dozen screens to get to them. Once you've picked them up it's back to the cottage to put them in the cauldron. If you get all six you can go to the pumpkin's lair and get the golden broomstick.

The graphics both above and below ground are excellent with a great little hag and scenery. The title screen has a very atmospheric piece of music and even the instructions are done in style – they rhyme.

BW



SECOND OPINION

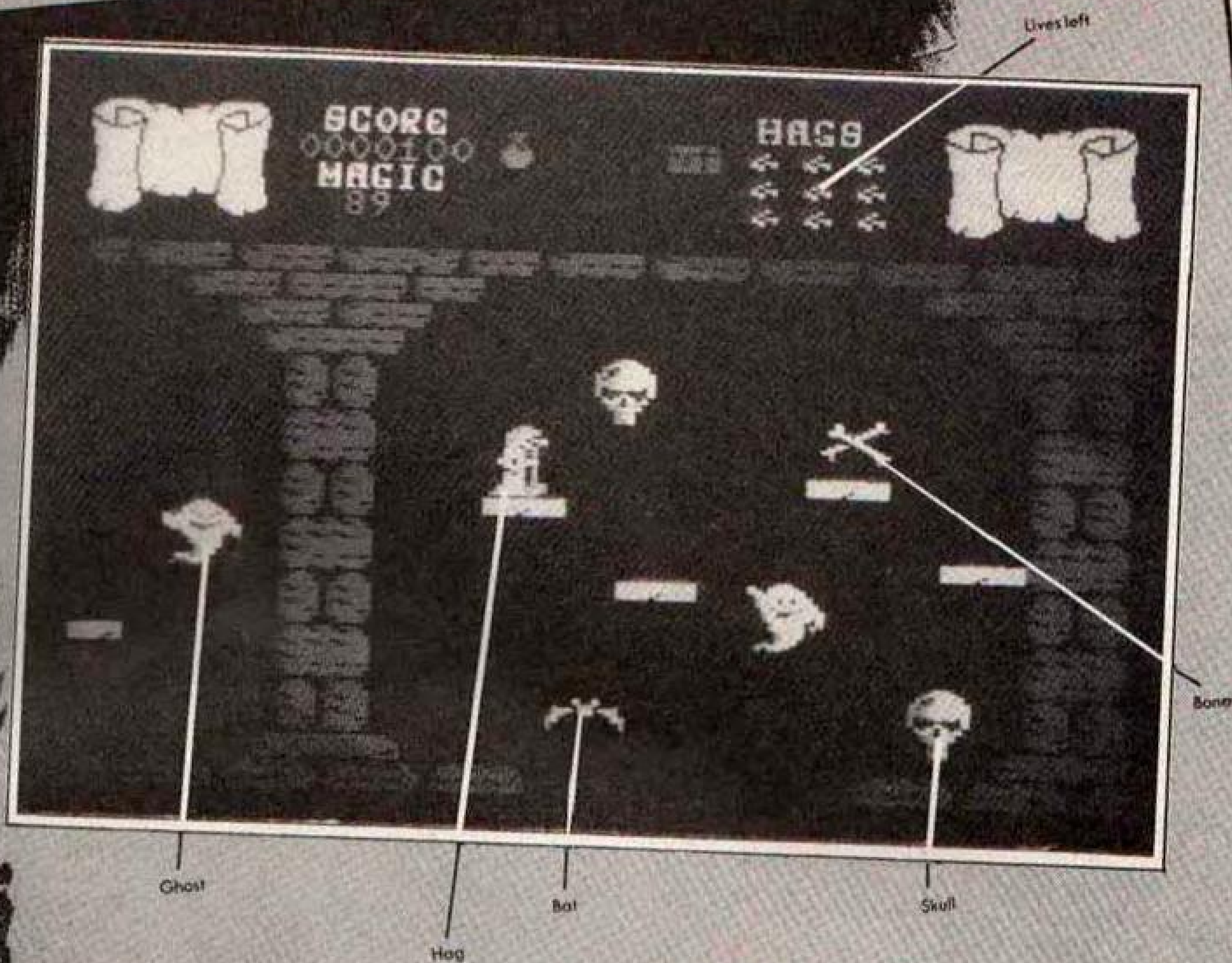
A Hansel and Gretel-ish world of strange and sinister goings on is created by the uses of some exceptionally pretty graphics. The hag herself is really very ugly. The magic of the game lies in its combination of upstairs and downstairs - a broomstick game and a platform game. It's all very smoothly done, with great graphics and spellbinding gameplay.

PC



The hag wings her away across the night sky, accompanied by a posse of bats.







The cauldron rhyme

The instructions to the game are in verse. We thought you might like to hear it.

Harken witches
Everywhere,
Take the challenge-
If you dare-

Tomorrow night
'Tis Halloween
When only one
Shall be Witch Queen.

Six ingredients
Thou must take
and in the cauldron
Boil and bake-

Juice of toad,
Eye of newt,
Wing of bat
Hemlock root,

Mouldy piece of
Splintered bone
Found from deep
In musty tomb,

Molten lava,
Cooled awhile,
Taken from the
Smoking Isle.

Then the spell
Shall be at hand
To rid the Pumpkin
From the land.

So play a game
of high adventure,
Hold control
and then press enter.



GOOD NEWS

- Two types of game in one.
- Marvellous graphics both above and below ground.
- Both sections are extremely playable and easy to control.
- Tough task requiring lots of skill.
- Atmospheric music and instructions.

BAD NEWS

- Finding route on platform sections is mostly trial and error.

GRAPHICS	89%
SONICS	69%
GRAB FACTOR	93%
STAYING POWER	88%
A A RATING	89%

ther harder. He can be killed off by shooting him from behind off the end of a walkway into the gap. These two reptiles cause tremendous problems because there is never any rest as you are continually chased about – enough to make anybody panic.

With practice some tactics reveal themselves that will help you stay one step ahead but the game will always be a demanding challenge. The graphics and sound are nothing special but the addictive quality of the game is in its maddening task. It seems so simple yet it is so hard to achieve and you just have to keep trying. If you've no patience this could well drive you up the wall, round the bend and into the nearest pub. Me? I think I'll have one more play. AAAAAAARGH!

BW

G O O D N E W S

- **Highly addictive.**
- **Calls for constant attention and thought.**
- **Very difficult to complete.**
- **Cheaper than usual.**

B A D N E W S

- **Bad for the nerves.**
- **Not much depth – just one infuriating task.**
- **May be a bit TOO maddening.**

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	44%
GRAB FACTOR	76%
STAYING POWER	60%
A A RATING	68%

WORLD CUP SOCCER

Macmillan, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Our second football strategy game of the month simulates the action in the World Cup, even if it is about six months too early on the scene. It's a mixture of strategy and arcade action as you try to get your team through the various stages of the World Cup finals and lift the trophy.

The packaging includes a booklet on football in general and more specifically the history of the World Cup and its stars in previous years. Having absorbed all the history, laws, skills, roles, tactics and characters of the sport you can get into the computer program.

You start with the choice of warming up or playing the tournament and you'd be well advised to warm up first as this is where you can practice the arcade skills needed to win matches. There are two main sequences which simulate shooting and heading skills. Shooting is a sort of *Breakout* style game in which you control a boot at the bottom of the screen which is protecting a net. At the top of the screen is a smaller moving net into which you have to get the ball.

The ball appears in the middle of the screen and starts to bounce around the screen at various angles. You have to connect with it with the boot to stop the ball hitting your net. The graphics are very fast and colourful but don't match up to the heading section. This is a 3D view of a goal and a player's head at the bottom of the screen.

A ball appears from the top left of the screen and curves down the screen. You have to head it goalwards where a nicely animated goalie will dive to try to save it. These two sequences will be used in part of the matches to determine the final score so a good performance is necessary.

When you've finished warming up you can go into the competition proper and choose one of the many teams available. Once you've been told where the finals are being held and which pool you're in you can name your team which consists of a squad of 22 players.

You're initially placed in a pool of four teams and have to play each of them in a bid to reach the next round. Your team has three qualities: skill, strength and stamina, which combine to make up their overall ability. 11 players have to be picked to form the best attack, midfield and defence that you can. Close attention must be paid to the other team to see its strengths and weaknesses but with all the studying in the world you're eventually reliant on the players and a bit of luck.

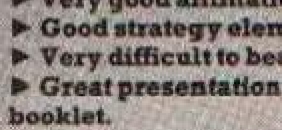
The first half is computer controlled and as the minutes tick rapidly away goals, injuries and sendings off are announced. The occasional penalty will also crop up and depending on whether it's for or against you, you get to choose whether you shoot or dive, left or right. The action is then animated much as for the heading screen.

The second half is for the player to control as it is composed of the two arcade sequences. Combining the two halves together gives you the final result and all figures are updated accordingly. The competition continues through like this until the final although getting there will be a really hard task due to the strength of the other teams.

The whole package is very slick and the game very enjoyable. The graphic sequences are very nicely done and well thought out and all the action is accompanied by an optional tune that is very pleasant. It's a much shorter game to play than *Big League Soccer* and instead of providing a game that could last forever, it gives a more action-packed and fast-moving game.

BW





SECOND OPINION

As a forestaste of the summer's action this program is very entertaining. For those who find the football strategy games too time-consuming – after all, it can take a long time to get Rochdale to the top of Division 1 – it is a welcome change. The arcade sections are very pretty indeed and give some gentle relief from the brainwork. Non football-fanatics should find the accompanying booklet interesting and a genuine aid to doing well in the game.

PC

G O O D N E W S

- **Very good animation and graphics.**
- **Good strategy element.**
- **Very difficult to beat.**
- **Great presentation of game and booklet.**

B A D N E W S

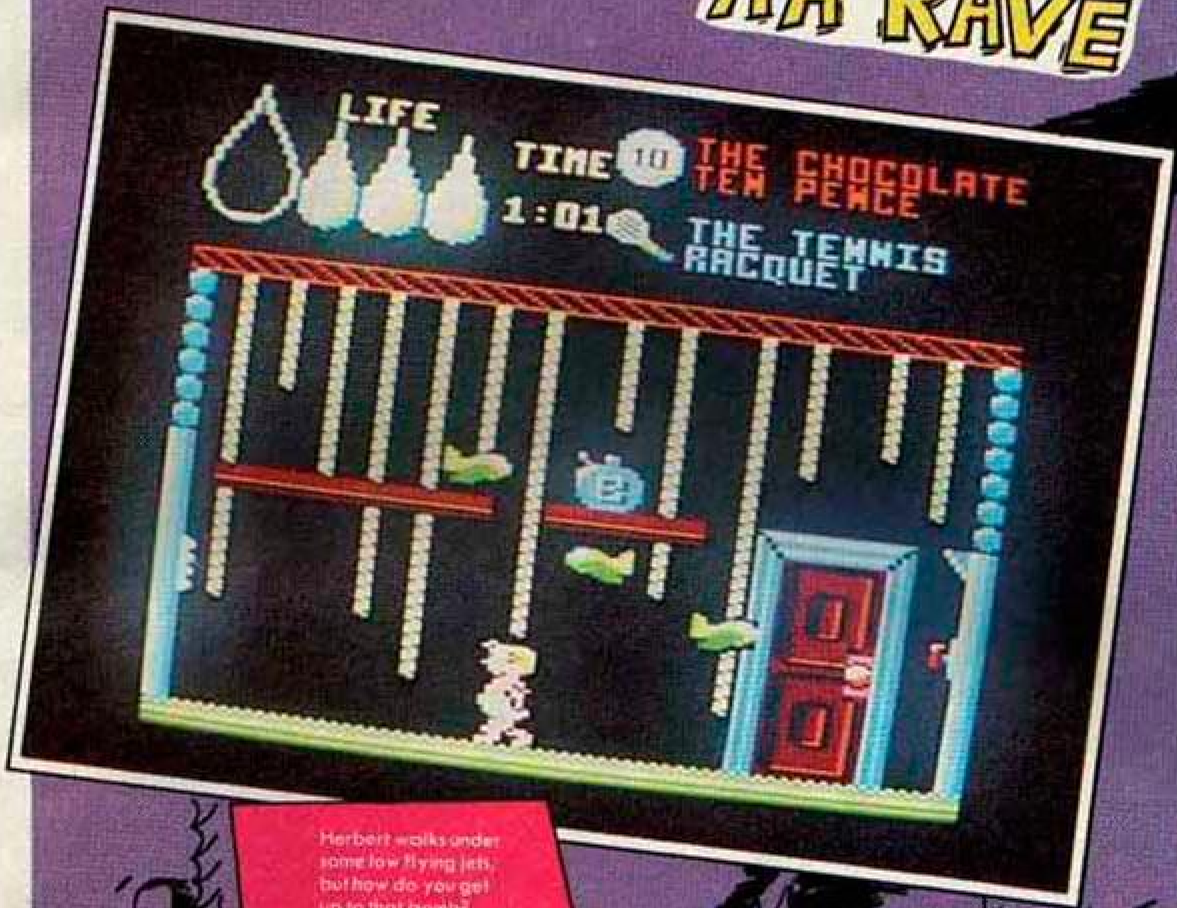
- **Difficult to evaluate how well you're doing at the arcade sequences.**
- **Once the cup is won you may not want to play anymore.**

GRAPHICS	84%
SONICS	68%
GRAB FACTOR	79%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	78%

HERBERT'S DUMMY RUN

Mikro-Gen, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys





Herbert walks under some low flying jets, but how do you get up to that bomb?



The long running Wally saga continues with his little brat Herbert lost in a big, nasty department store full of hostile goods. Herbie has to find his parents in the 'lost and found' department and reunite himself with them.

The game follows the same pattern as the previous *Wally* games with young Herbie having to use objects to complete tasks. The tasks form a chain of events so that an object obtained by completing one task will make another one available to you. The thing is, it's up to you to decide which objects do what and how.

Herbert carries two objects at a time which are swapped with others by just passing through them. His 'lives' are in the form of teardrops which gradually fill with water if he touches moving nasties until they overflow and a cloudburst of tears descend on his head. Herbie's sensitive disposition can be soothed by various goodies and food that will reduce his flood of tears.

Most screens are full of dangers for Herbie. They come in many different forms like tanks, tennis balls and jumbo jets but are usually fast moving and bounce all over the screen or shuttle up and down the floor. Herbert makes his way around by walking and jumping, and can use stairs and the lift to get between floors. If he tries to use the lift when it isn't on his floor though he's in for a long drop through dangerous territory.

In great Mikro-Gen style there are two screens which double as arcade games, one in which you have to play a faultless game of *Breakout*, to obtain an object, and the other a game of *Space Invaders* against a constant stream of blasting daleks. These are great fun in themselves and may well sidetrack you from the main game task.

Herbert's progress is measured in jelly beans and when the poor little toddler finally breaks down in an endless flood of tears the number he's earned is revealed – the more the better. They are awarded for just getting about the place and for completing tasks, indicating how much of the game has been completed.

SECOND OPINION

Wally and Wilma have the sort of child that social workers despair of but games designers adore. Herbie's come up trumps in this game, although the stunning graphics do rather overshadow other aspects of the game. This though is still pretty enjoyable and by no means easy. The game-interludes are jolly fun and provide some much-needed respite from the adventure tasks.

PC

The graphics are every bit as good as *Everyone's a Wally* and even more colourful, while the gameplay and tasks that face you are just as absorbing as *EAW* and *Pyjamarama*.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Marvellous graphics, animation and colour.**
- **Lots of difficult tasks.**
- **Games within games like Breakout and Space Invaders.**
- **A variety of well drawn and smooth moving nasties.**
- **Plenty of locations packed with objects.**

BAD NEWS

- **Very similar to *EAW* and *Pyjamarama*.**
- **You can die very quickly from a careless move.**

GRAPHICS	94%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	82%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	81%

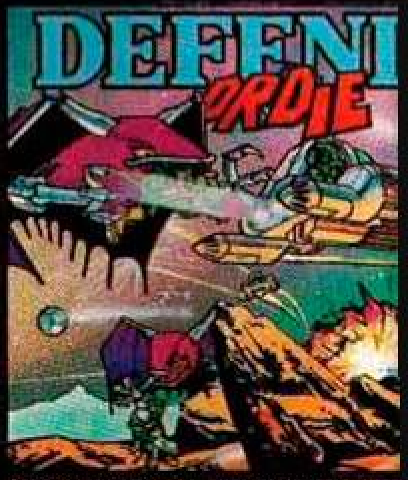
Clues to get you going

Just to get you started with Herbert's little quest here are a few cryptic clues.

1. To get a helping hand you'll need something to hit a ball.
2. You don't want that groping hand to leave fingerprints so carry some digital protection.
3. All gone dark? Then a flower's root should mend a light giver.
4. If your gun lacks a pop then give it a bottle plug.
5. Can't get the bomb? Act like Daley Thompson climbing the rope.
6. Got a sinking feeling? Make sure you know where the lift is.

ALLIGATA FOR AMSTRAD





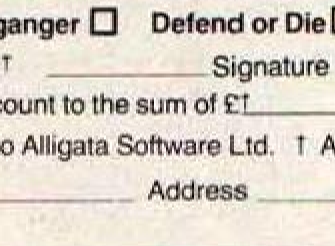
A classic battle spectacular where skill and reflexes are pushed to the limit, nerves strained to breaking point. Take up the solo mission of saving fellow humanoids from being plucked from your planet surface by the evil landers and then returned to outer space where they will eventually mutate and take up a pursuit on your spacefighter.
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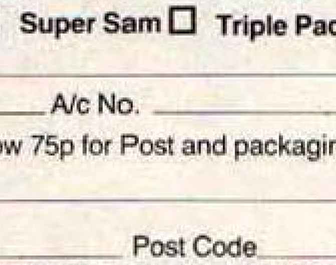


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BATTLE OF BRITAIN

PSS, £9.95 cass, joystick only

This latest in the PSS wargamers series is the recreation of that famous battle in the skies above south-east England during the second world war. It pits you as the beleaguered commander of Britain's RAF bases against the full force of the Luftwaffe. The game features a mix of arcade and strategy action to give you both a general's and a pilot's eye view of things.

The game can be played on three levels: a training game in which you fight just one day of the battle, a blitzkrieg in which the Luftwaffe hit you as hard as possible in one day and the campaign game in which you recreate 30 days of the battle. The first two options are ideal for short introductory games, while the campaign option provides the real lasting challenge.

Once you've chosen which game to play a map of England and Wales appears on screen with nine air bases, 13 radar stations and 15 towns/cities marked on it. All of these are potential targets for the Luftwaffe and have to be defended by the 18 squadrons of Spitfires and Hurricanes at your disposal. These are dotted around the airfields but the same squadrons are always in the same place. Also on the map is a white cursor which is what you control everything with and use to find out information about particular sites.

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *As unregenerate shoot-em-upper I really enjoyed the dogfight sequences. A few rounds of Browning fire and another Messerschmitt bites the dust. Or possibly a Junkers 88. The strategy element is up to PSS's usual high standards, which means an engrossing game that will last just about as long as you've got time for. Time to scramble again.*
>
> PC

The action starts when Luftwaffe squadrons appear on the map, detected by your radar, which also reveals the size of the formation. Firstly the fighter squadrons have to be scrambled and then guided on the map to the target. They appear as little red, white and blue symbols which once set on course will proceed automatically to the destination you set them. If a squadron encounters the enemy then a battle results.

Here you can either take part in an arcade sequence or leave the computer to work out the conclusion of the fight. If you opt for a blast then the view will switch to a forward one from a Spitfire cockpit. In front of you will be a formation of bombers escorted by fighters or a formation of fighters. You choose which formation to go after and then home in on one single plane as it looms large in your view. You have limited ammunition and time to centre as many planes in your sights as possible and riddle them with bullets so that they curve away trailing smoke as they head for the ground.

At the end of the battle you will be out of ammunition and probably low on fuel as well so that the squadron will need to return to an airfield to resupply. If the attack was successful the enemy formation may be depleted enough to have to turn for home, otherwise it will keep heading for its target. If a squadron does run out of fuel it will be lost to you for that day but not the whole campaign if you play the long game.

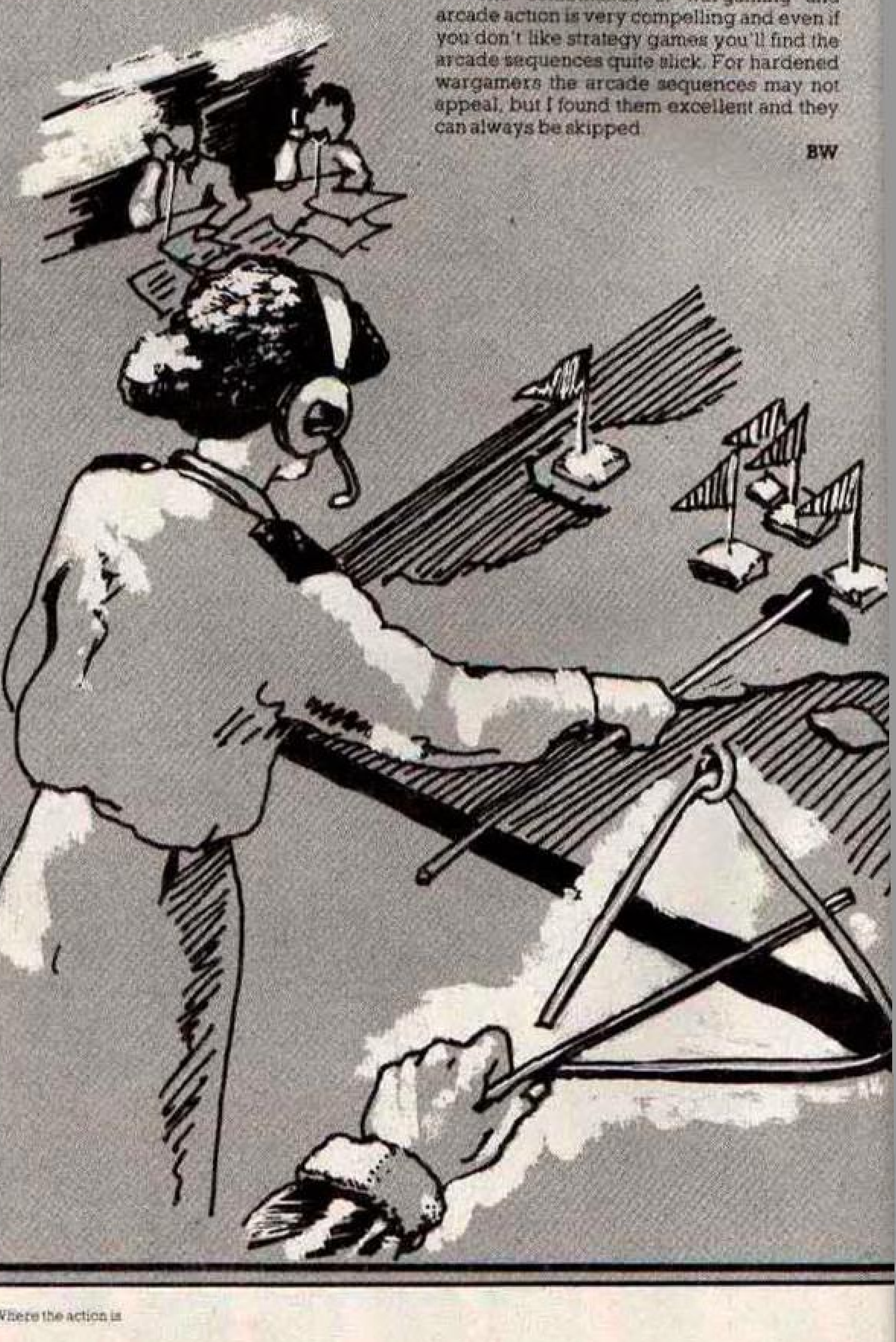
If the enemy get through to one of the three types of target then different results will occur. If they attack a city then no damage will immediately be apparent but the bombed citizens will not take kindly to it and the final command ability score will be affected. If a radar station is attacked it may be put out of action and a gap will appear in the radar screen through which formations can slip unnoticed until they reach the coast.

If an airfield is attacked then another action screen can be played. This has you in control of an anti-aircraft gun as planes strafe and bomb the airfield with you trying to bring them out of the sky. The enemy will probably succeed in cratering the runway or making the airfield completely unusable. This means squadrons may take losses on landing or be unable to land at all and have to be diverted to other airfields. The weather can also close airfields with fog preventing take-offs or landings.

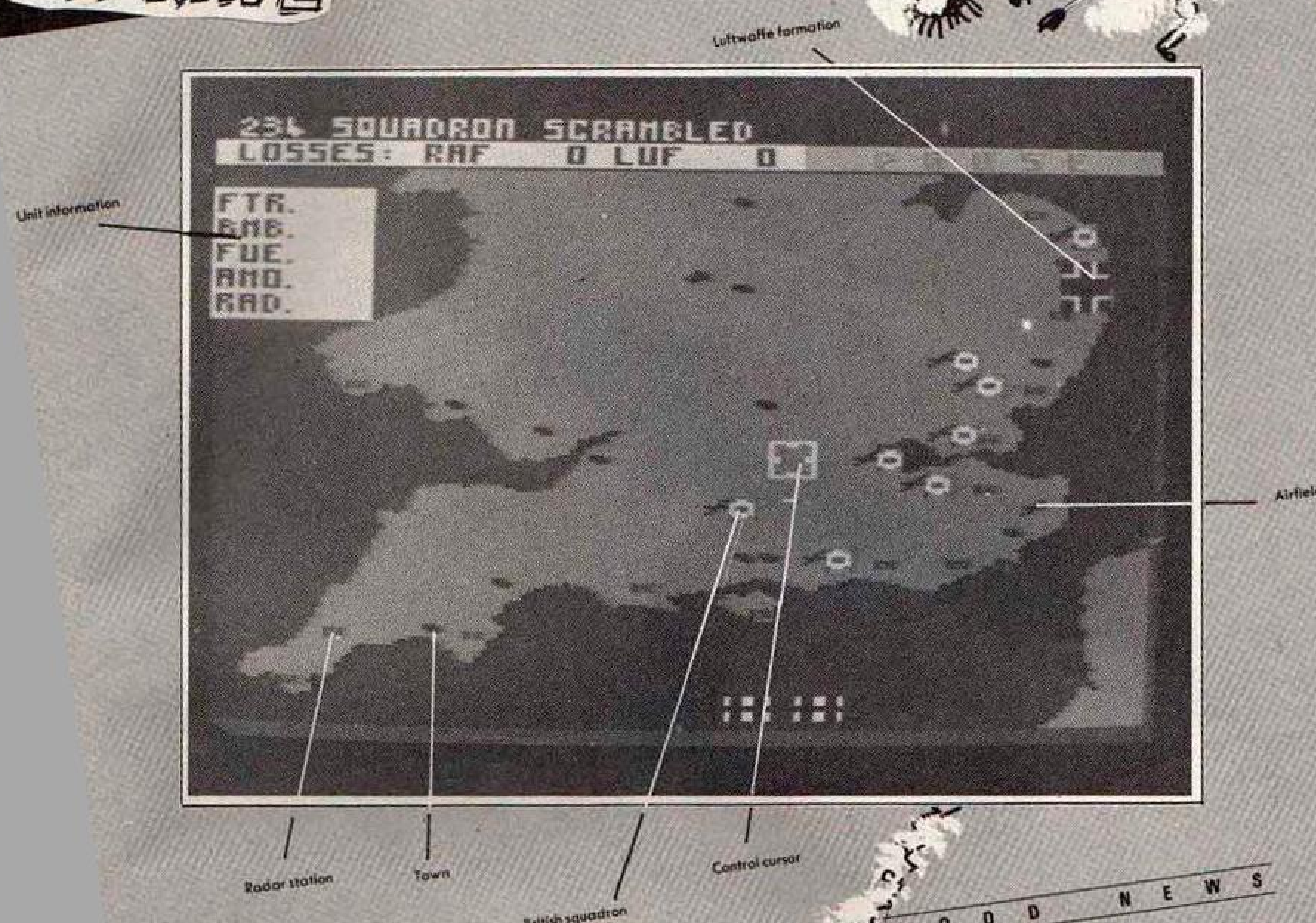
At the end of the day you're told how many losses each side suffered and your command ability. In the campaign game this is accompanied by your averaged overall ability over the campaign and followed by a resupply section where pilots and planes are allocated to squadrons depleted in the fighting.

The combination of wargaming and arcade action is very compelling and even if you don't like strategy games you'll find the arcade sequences quite slick. For hardened wargamers the arcade sequences may not appeal, but I found them excellent and they can always be skipped.

BW





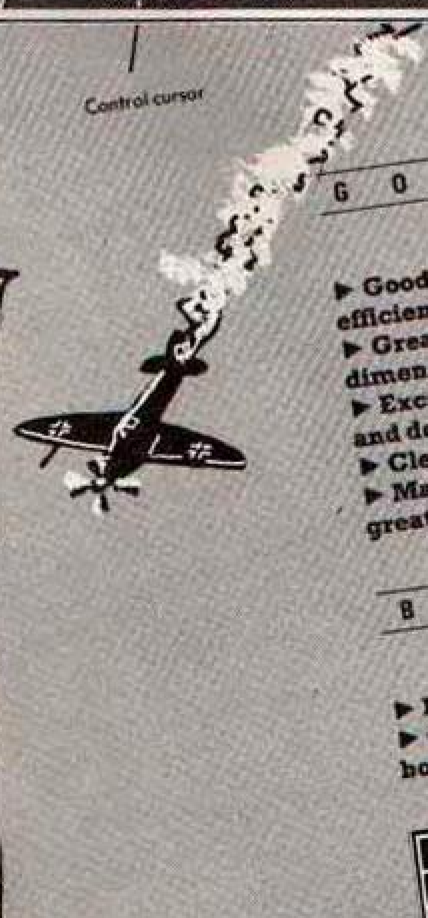


An untimely reminder?

The fact that Amstrads are so popular in West Germany may cause this game to get a bit of flak of its own. PSS may well be tactful enough not to release it over there but even so I'm sure there will be some people not entirely happy with the 'tally-ho chaps, let's show the Hun a thing or two' attitude that the Battle of Britain tends to inspire.

It's a bit like showing those old black and white war films on TV – they no longer have any relevance and have to be taken purely as entertainment. Fortunately this isn't the sort of game that would appeal to someone of too impressionable an age so that any players should be old enough to have learnt that there was nothing glamorous about the real thing.

We would be interested to know whether you think games like this and the forthcoming nuclear war simulation *Theatre Europe* should just be treated as games or whether they have more important (dangerous?) implications.



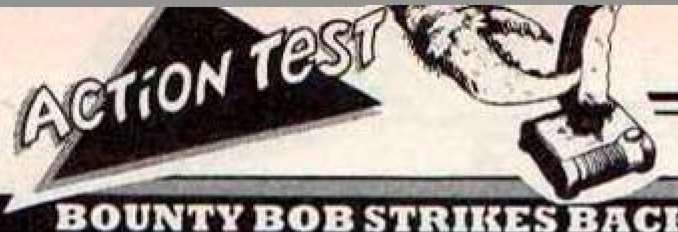
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Good strategic element calling for fast, efficient handling of forces.
- ▶ Great arcade sequences add a different dimension.
- ▶ Excellent graphics for map, airfields and dogfights.
- ▶ Clear instructions.
- ▶ Map and arcade sequences really give great atmosphere in this battle of wits.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Little historical detail in instructions.
- ▶ Occasional lulls in the battle can be boring as you wait for time to pass.

GRAPHICS	81%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	81%





BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK

US Gold/Big Five, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The 'original' platform game is now a dim and distant memory for most games players and was never converted to the Amstrad. Its successor is now with us and stars the same character, a miner called Bounty Bob. His previous game was *Miner 2049'er* and this follows the classic platform game style of completing one screen at a time.

The scene is an abandoned mine where radioactive waste seepage has turned all the furry, fluffy, cute animals into a very nasty bunch of mutant, miner-killing beasts. Bob's task is to get through over twenty screens full of these nasties and other special features.

Each screen is full of platforms which Bob has to walk over. As he does so the floor fills in with a solid colour and he scores points. Once he's filled in the whole floor it's on to the next screen and a totally different layout.

Populating the platforms in vast numbers are the radioactive animals. These follow set movement patterns along the floor, glowing brightly as they shuffle about. If Bob runs into them he loses one of his three lives – which is a pretty skimpy measure for a tough game like this.

SECOND OPINION

Platform games take the player back to the dawn of computer gaming – if he's old enough. Which I am. I can honestly say this is one of the best I've ever played. It may not look much to begin with, but it hooks you right away and does not let go. Set aside a good few hours if you want to play it. Set aside a few more if you want to crack it.

PC

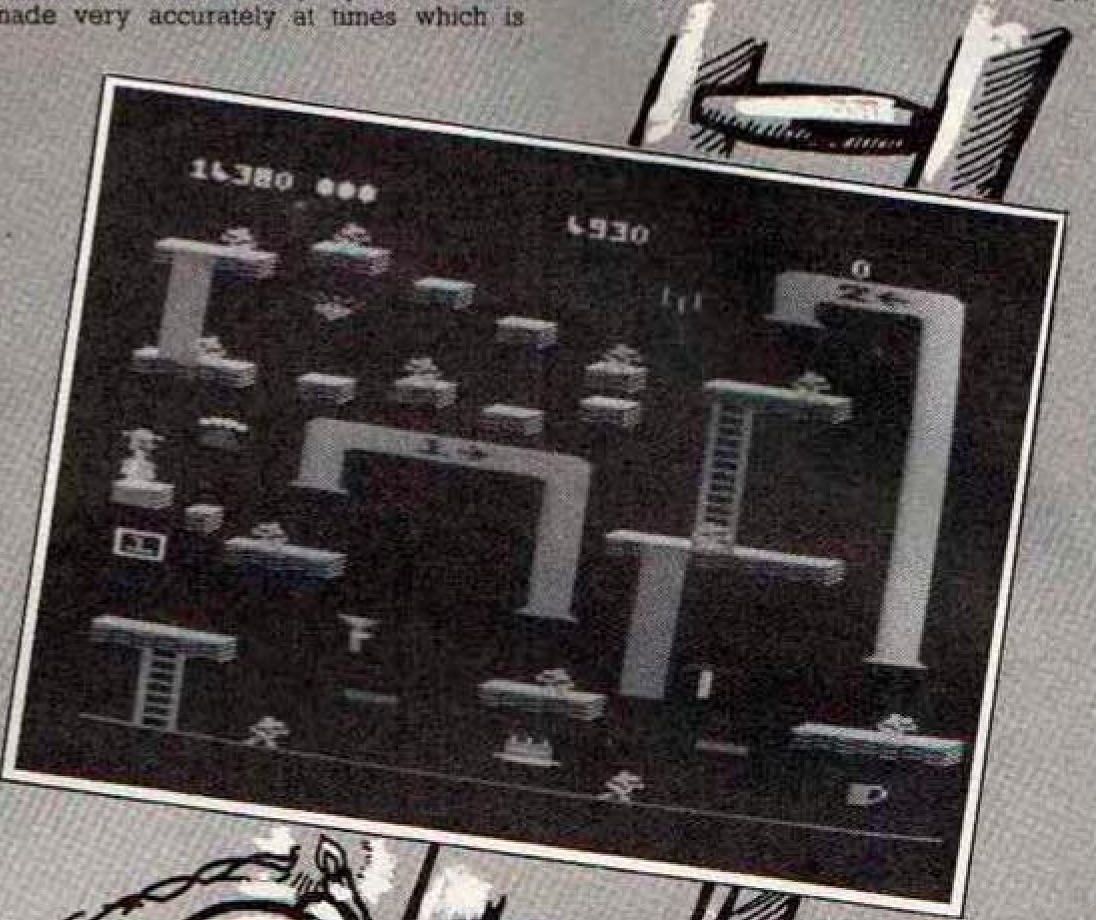
The monsters can be stopped though when Bob picks up one of the many non-moving objects that are dotted about the screens. These are worth points but more importantly give Bob a period of immunity to the radiation in which the monsters turn into cute animals again – Bob can stomp on them before they turn back. Every time you die in a single game the objects reappear but the monsters that have been removed do not. Any filled in floor also remains so that Bob merely has to get back to his point of dying and carry on trying to complete the screen.

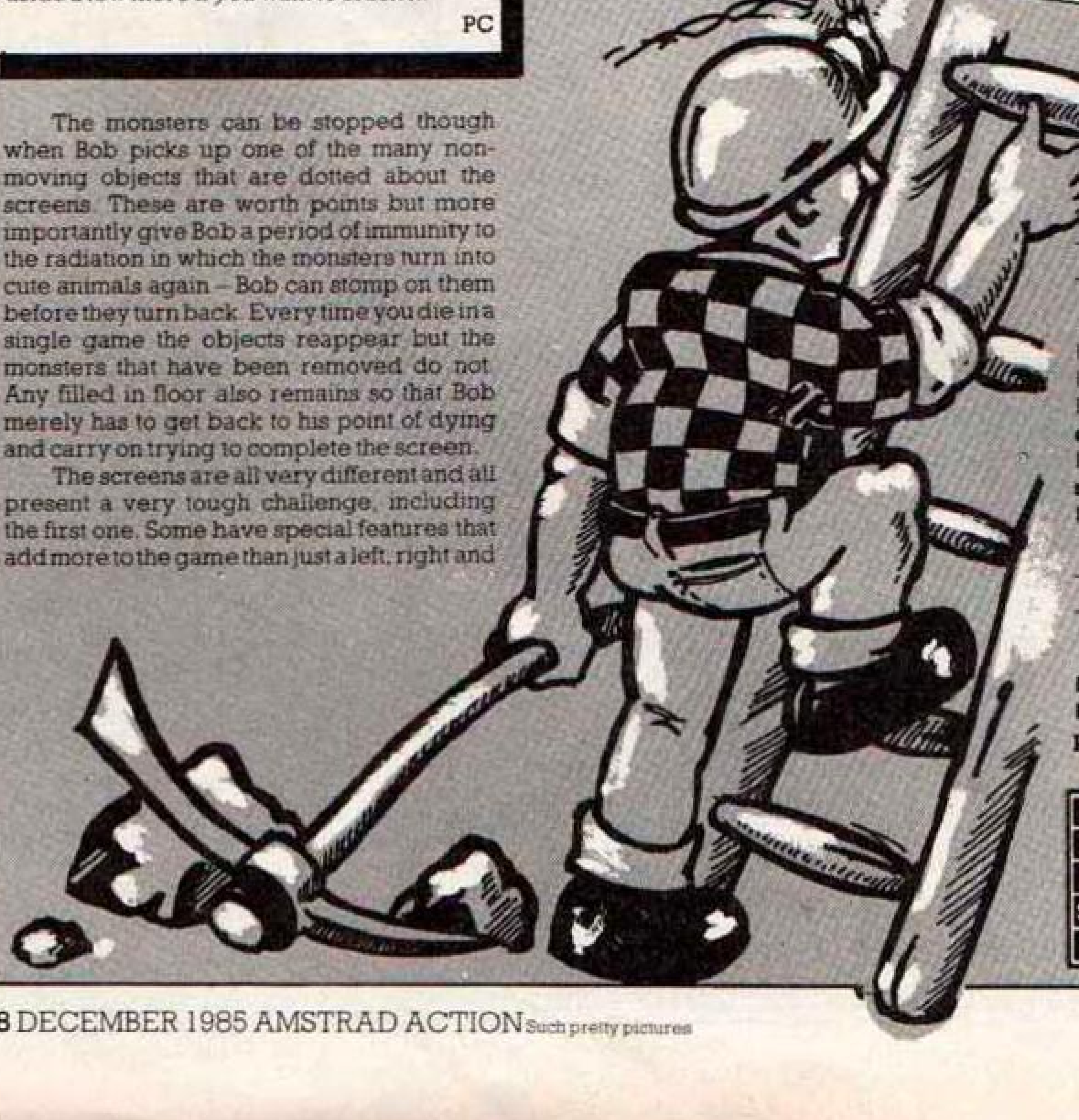
The screens are all very different and all present a very tough challenge, including the first one. Some have special features that add more to the game than just a left, right and jump action. A utility hoist can be controlled to move you about the screen while suction tubes pick you up from one point and deposit you in another. Teleport lifts also move Bob around and moving platforms move him across gaps. Ladders are a slightly more conventional form of transport and there are lots of slides down which Bob can descend.

Apart from the animals, falling is the main danger to Bob since if he falls too far he loses a life. This means jumps have to be made very accurately at times which is where the variable jump control comes in. This allows you to jump vertically and then move left or right at any point on the up or down cycle to start the jump going in that direction.

All of the screens are brilliantly designed to test your skills to the limit and feature lots of colourful action. There are some cutesy sound effects as well but even these may get on your nerves after a while.

BW







GOOD NEWS

- **Over 20 diabolically difficult screens.**
- **Colourful and well-designed screens.**
- **Highly addictive action as you try to crack just one more screen.**
- **Some nice special features such as suction tubes, slides, lifts.**
- **A truly superb platform game.**

BAD NEWS

- **Three lives doesn't seem like a lot.**
- **Apart from some features not many prizes for originality.**

GRAPHICS	81%
SONICS	53%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	85%
A A RATING	84%



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the ultimate space-game

ELITE

At last! The game that everyone's been talking about for a year has landed on the Amstrad. We bring you an exclusive preview of the engrossing deep space thriller, and explain just why it's so special.



SNAKE SHIPS: all the ships are named after snakes and here the view is filled by a deadly viper.

ELITE —the game

The basic concept of *Elite* is to become one of the special few in the universe who achieve ELITE status in combat with other ships. This calls for a mixture of fighting skill and trading ability. There are 2000 planets in this universe. You start at one of them with little cash and a poorly armed ship.

From this you have to build up to a heavily armed combat veteran with enough 'credits' to buy any weaponry you need to vapourise the toughest, meanest ships in space. To get money you have to trade cannily at the space stations that orbit each planet. This requires a knowledge of the planets, goods and prices so that you can buy low and sell high.

Trading is dangerous, though, because once you've left the safety of the staion, you're fair game for any passing mercenary who takes a dislike to you. Out in space the 3D vector graphics occupy your view as you pilot your ship using the bank of instruments on screen. If you encounter other ships it's usually a case of kill or be killed with no quarter given and profit always the motive.

Your ship can be equipped with many different features to help you along but they all cost money. Your lasers can be upgraded in three stages to lethal military lasers, while fuel scoops, large cargo bays, docking computers and galactic hyperdrive can help you find new trading sources for more profit.

There are many different ships in space all with different characteristics and looks but all help improve your rating if you destroy them. That is your path to becoming ELITE. You start at HARMLESS and as your kill quota increases so does your ranking – but everybody is after your hide.

ELITE — The Amstrad Difference

Features have varied with each micro version of the game and the Amstrad is set to have its own special additions – additions that will make it the most exciting version yet.

Instead of a mere two original special missions **four** new ones have been put in and Torus think you'll find them a lot more challenging than before. They obviously aren't going to tell you what they are, but they do reveal that even they haven't been able to complete the fourth one yet.

Music will also feature on the finished version although Torus haven't quite decided where and what it will be. The Commodore 64 version featured the Blue Danube from 2001 on the docking sequence but because this is different on the Amstrad the music is likely to appear elsewhere.

Graphically the Amstrad version will be the most colourful yet with suns and planets in an astounding seven colours. These will even be able to mask each other like an eclipse. Deep space will get a whole new look as colour is added to the smooth vector graphics.

The other exciting possibility is an enhanced disc version. This hasn't been finalised yet but Torus hope to put in the full complement of snake ships, perhaps even including some new ones of their own design. They also plan to put in yet more special missions. As if four weren't enough!

All these features will make Amstrad *Elite* the best version yet. It's going to be the ultimate space adventure.

ELITE — The *specialty* factor

If you've never encountered *Elite* before you're probably wondering what all the fuss is about. After all, it's just a game – isn't it? Well, it's a game with everything though: blasting action, canny trading, smooth vector graphics, massive playing area, special missions, attention to detail, free choice of role and lots more.

In fact it can become more a way of life than a game, in which you decide whether to be a peaceful trader, murderous pirate, deadly bounty hunter, gun runner, drugs pusher, slave trader or asteroid miner – or all of them! Whichever role you take up it's a constant struggle against the odds to achieve wealth and equipment in pursuit of the title *Elite*.

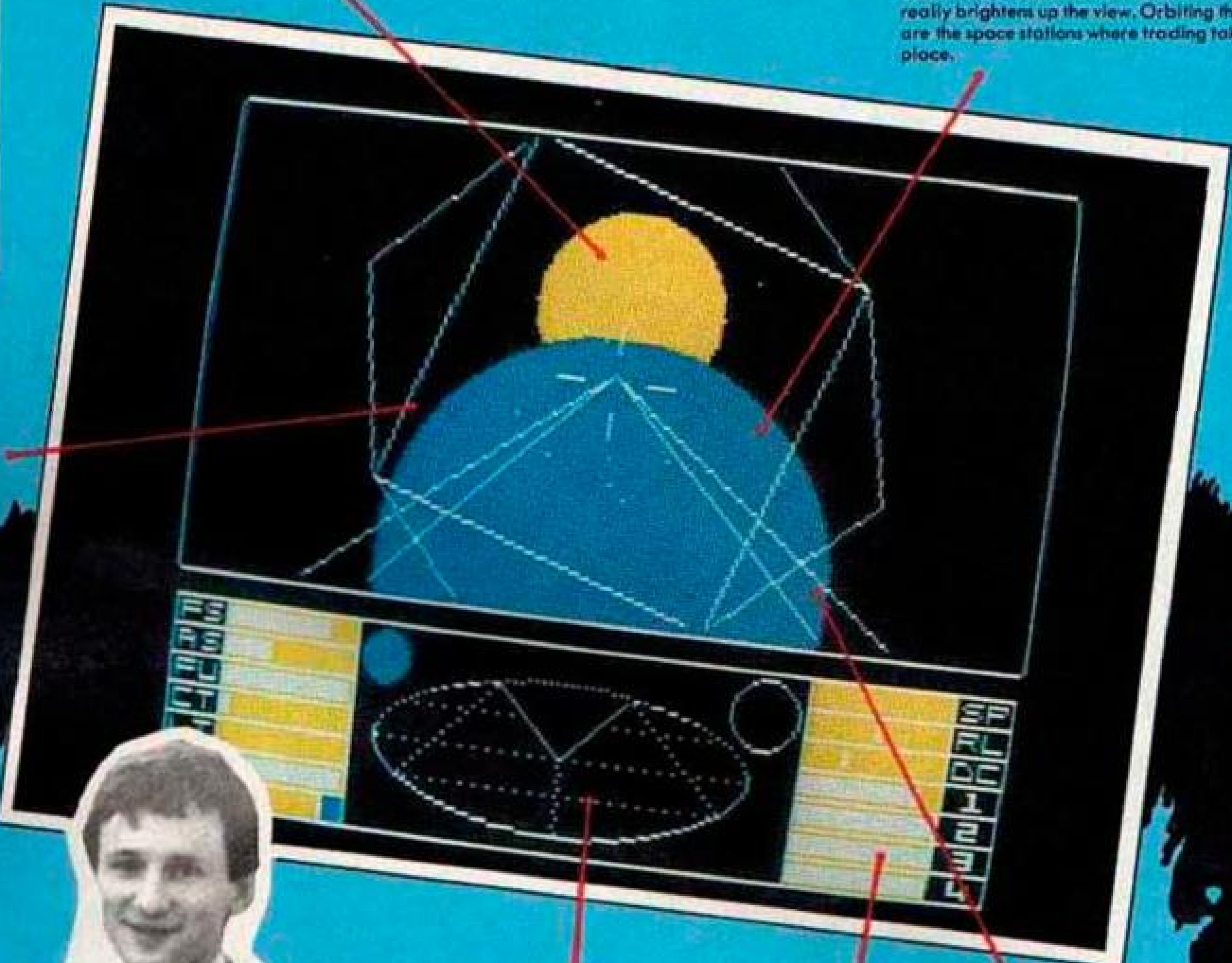
Ricardo Pinto of Torus puts the game's immense success down to the variety within the game and the fact that you can

play it non-stop for hours on end without tiring of the challenge.

The hype around the game certainly helped it along but when you read the novelette enclosed with the it, work through the detailed and humourous instructions and then play your first few games in this new universe you can't help getting caught up in the atmosphere and thrill of it all. There's so much to do and explore that you'll probably never know everything about the game, but the fun is in trying to.

SUNS: these appear in all the planetary systems and can be used to scoop fuel from instead of buying it.

PLANETS: these have taken on a new coloured appearance on the Amstrad that really brightens up the view. Orbiting them are the space stations where trading takes place.



SPACE STATION: orbit planets and are the places where you can trade, buy weaponry or just give yourself a well-earned rest.

SCANNER: this provides a three dimensional radar scan of the space surrounding the ship. Ships are represented by little flags.

ENERGY: this is used up by lasers, ECM (anti-missile system) and enemy fire once the shields are down. If it is exhausted you are destroyed. Automatically replenished.

LASERS: you are initially equipped with pulse lasers that are centred on the on-screen sight. More powerful beam or military lasers can be bought.



ELITE — programmers

The team that are writing *Elite* for the Amstrad have an impressive pedigree. They are known collectively as Torus which, currently composed of four very dedicated members.

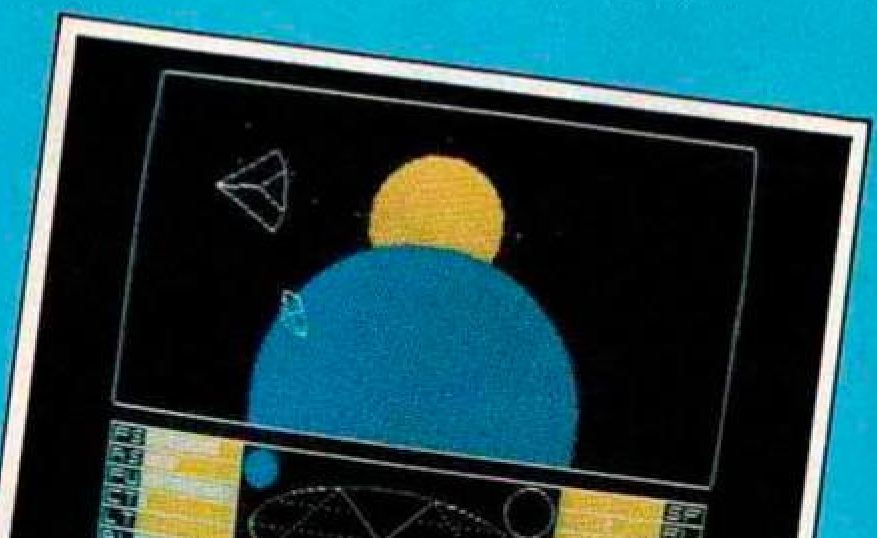
Ricardo Pinto has a mathematics degree from Dundee while Dominic Prior has the same qualification from Oxford. Together, they are the nucleus of Torus, having joined forces early in 1984. Mark Wighton, a later addition, has impressive qualifications too, studying artificial intelligence, while the newest member of the team, Diane McDonald, has an MSc in Cryptology.

The team's previous program was *Gyron* on the Spectrum which made quite a splash but not a lot of money for them. The need for 'ready cash', as Ricardo put it, was what made them take on the *Elite* conversion and although he didn't like the game at first it grew on him as he discovered the 'complete world'.

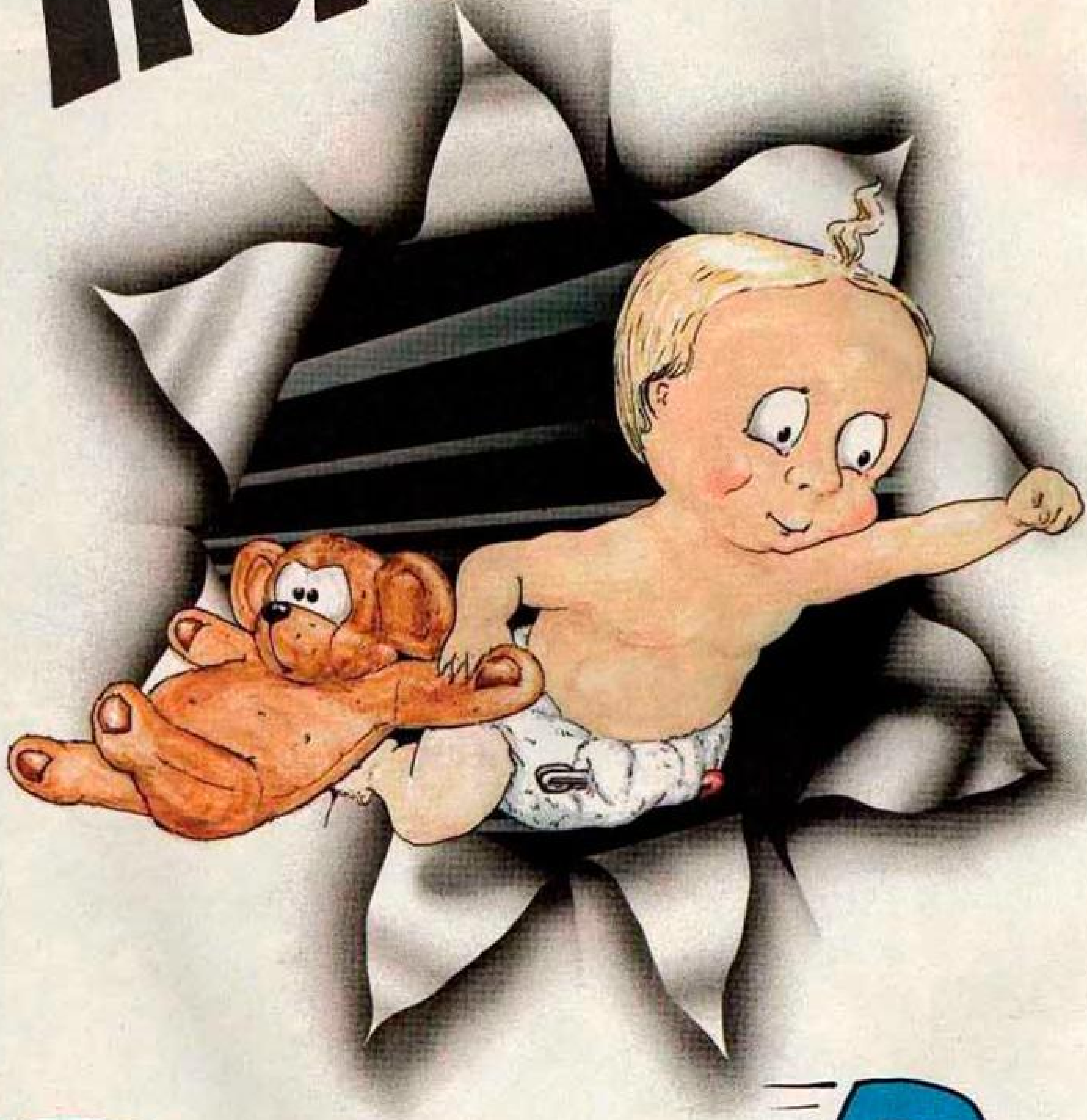
The team develop games on an Apricot, but since starting the conversion of *Elite* they've discovered the joys of the Amstrad. They're now planning to switch their attention to it and produce original games with an eye to converting them for Spectrum — makes a nice change!

The next game from them will be *Hive*, another 3D blockbuster set in the twisting innards of an insect hive where you have to fly through the maze of tunnels to destroy the queen. That bare description hardly starts to describe the graphic wonders you can expect of it. Further in the future are original Amstrad developments which, just to give you a taste, Ricardo says will make 'line graphics look pathetic' and be 'five times faster than *Elite*.'

Watch out for this lot — we think they're going to make a very big impact on the Amtrad. They've certainly got the talent and the ideas to do it.



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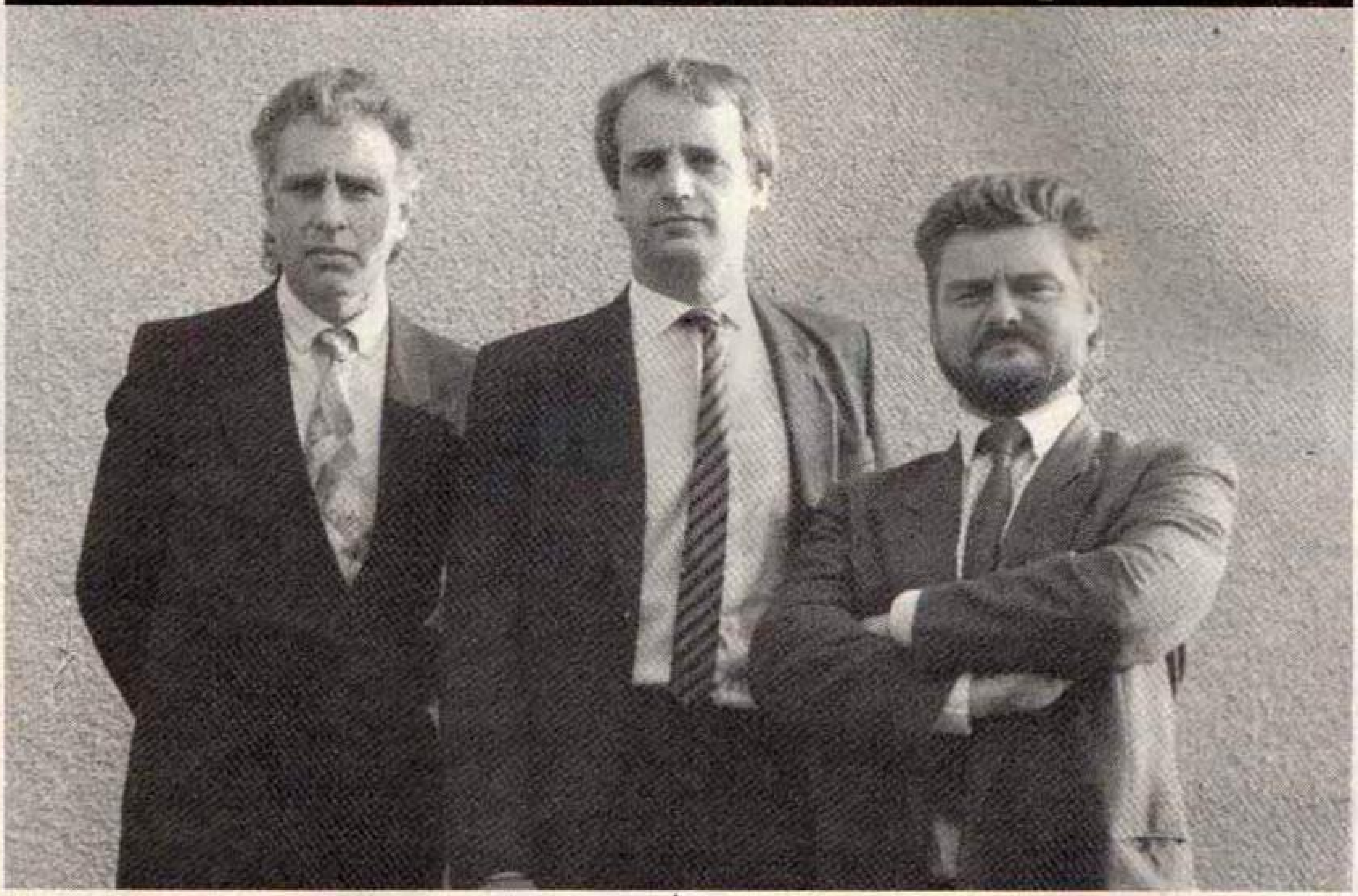
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Gargoyle

the men behind Marsport



▶ The Gargoyle triumvirate outside their Dudley offices

Six months ago Gargoyle released their first game on the Amstrad – Dun Darach – and immediately established themselves as one of the most innovative software houses around. Now Marsport has arrived and become the AA Mastergame. Chris Anderson motored to the Midlands to find out how only three men produce such masterful mega-games.

Step into the second floor offices in Dudley (turn left when the M5 hits Birmingham), and you may be surprised to discover that the suite of unusually tidy rooms contains just three hard-working professionals. No secretaries, no receptionists, no spotty whizz-kids lounging around in jeans. Just Greg Follis, Ted Heathcote and Roy Carter. Together they constitute Gargoyle Games.

You can divide software houses very roughly into two categories. Those dominated by marketing people with the accent on commercially-attractive games, smart licensing deals, heavy advertising and the like. And those, normally quite a bit smaller, who have made a name for themselves purely on the strength of the programs they've produced. Gargoyle, while not ignoring the demands of the business world, are proud to belong to the second category.

"My greatest dislike in the home software industry," says Carter, the programmer, "is the way certain games manage to do very well purely on the basis of their marketing. You can write the best game in the world, but unless you market it well it won't sell. It's a shame if you think you've written something better than what's being bought."

But despite having to compete against the nation's software giants – Ocean, US Gold, Activision, Melbourne House, and the like – Gargoyle have increasingly found that not only do their games get critical acclaim, they also sell in pretty large numbers.

It all started very quietly about three years ago. Roy Carter and Greg Follis had been working for years in business software and were looking at ways of launching out on their own. "There's a limit to how far you can go working for somebody else," says Carter.

It was the time when the home micro boom was in full swing, spear-headed by massive sales of the Sinclair Spectrum. The two had a long-standing interest in game-playing, puzzles, and science-fiction and so began ways of considering how they could apply their business software skills to the vast new market for





Preview 1: Sweevo's Travels

A glance at the advert in this issue should immediately convince you that, as Greg Follis says, this fun little Christmas number has absolutely nothing to do with Laurel and Hardy.

Gargoyle see the program as an entertaining interlude between parts 1 and 2 of the *Siege Trilogy*. It stars a characters who looks nothing at all like Stan Laurel and includes a background tune which sounds nothing at all like the Laurel and Hardy tune: Duh-duh dee duh, duh-duh dee duh, diddly duh, diddly duh, etc.

Nevertheless Sweevo finds himself in another fine mess, having to spend his time chasing around frantically avoiding slipping on banana skins and marbles and having his energy sapped by characters such as the ghost of Charlie Chaplin. 'It's like a giant and rather unusual game of tig,' says Follis.

The action takes place in a 3D background of format similar to that of Ultimate's *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*, but 'considerably more advanced'. 'Roy developed the techniques for it inside ten days,' commented Follis.

Numerous entertaining touches are promised. For example, part of the screen is filled by a picture of Sweevo's face. This doubles up as an energy indicator – as energy runs out his smile gradually turns into a frown. In addition it's planned to have the face react to what's happening on screen, grimacing every time he gets duffed.

Overall, Gargoyle see the game offering people an entertaining contrast to the considerable intellectual demands of their Seige of Earth titles. Due out by the end of November, it could prove just what Santa ordered.

home computer games.

Working in their spare time, they gradually put together a space shoot-em-up for the Spectrum called *Ad Astra*. It immediately won praise for the quality of its graphics – the game includes a sequence in which a series of spinning planets, depicted in superb detail, appear in the distance and hurtle out of the screen at you.



▶ Greg Follis: "Computer entertainment is here to stay"

Its success encouraged them, early last year, to turn Gargoyle into a limited company. They were joined by long-term aquaintance Ted Heathcote to take care of selling the games to distributors, always one of a software house's most difficult and frustrating tasks.



▶ Roy Carter: "The industry needs good products"

Even so it was another year before Follis and Carter took the big step and threw themselves full-time into the new company. During that time their attention had switched away from shoot-em-ups to arcade adventures, the big new craze in the software industry. Gargoyle had their own special ingredient to offer the waiting horde of Spectrum owners: astounding animation. It came in the shape of a wild-looking Celtic character called Cuchulainn, the star of an equally strangely-named game, *Tir Na Nog*.

No one before had been able to animate so smoothly such a large character – almost a third of a screen tall. The game immediately gave Gargoyle a strong cult following, further enhanced by

A case of teamwork

Here's how the Gargoyle triumvirate (all three are directors of the company) divide up their work:

It falls to Greg Follis to come up with the game ideas. He designs them, both in the sense of working out the scenario and characters, and in determining how the game can be presented on screen. He is also responsible for much of the 'look' of the games, drawing the characters and location backgrounds onscreen using a special art program.

Roy Carter is the programmer and works very closely with Follis, taking his ideas and converting them into a form the computer can understand. 'Once you know what you're trying to do, it's no problem,' he says. The main machine code is written on a Sanyo MBC-1150, a computer with the same Z80 processor as the Spectrum and Amstrad, and which Carter knows like the back of his hand.

Having a superb game is all very well, but it won't earn you a living unless you can get it into the shops and persuade people to buy it. That's the job of Ted Heathcote, who liases with people like distributors, cassette duplicators and journalists from Amstrad Action.

the follow up, *Dun Darach*. It's at this point that Amstrad owners come in, their rapidly increasing numbers persuading Gargoyle to seek a wider market for their wares. Because of Amstrad's strange policy of normally refusing to loan equipment to software houses, in summer this year they eventually bought a 464, and within two weeks Carter had *Dun Darach* converted.

'It's a very nice machine,' he told me. 'I like the fact it's so well documented. You can find out very quickly what you need to know. It's also proved very reliable. We've had trouble with the Spectrums we've got here, but not with the Amstrad.'

Dun Darach has been followed by *Marsport*, first in Gargoyle's ambitious 'Seige of Earth' trilogy (see panel). After the trilogy is planned a wacky sports game, about which I am allowed to say nothing. But what about the longer term? Where might Gargoyle be in, say, ten years time?

Peering deeply into a crystal ball, Greg Follis pronounced that the future lay in 'the large-scale *public* presentation of computer entertainment'. Say, a cross between playing *Dun Darach* and going to the cinema. 'If that were to happen I suspect we'd be writing software for it,' he murmured.

It's worth remembering if you ever bump into a wild-looking character called Cuchulainn at your local cinema round about 1995, you first read about it in Amstrad Action.

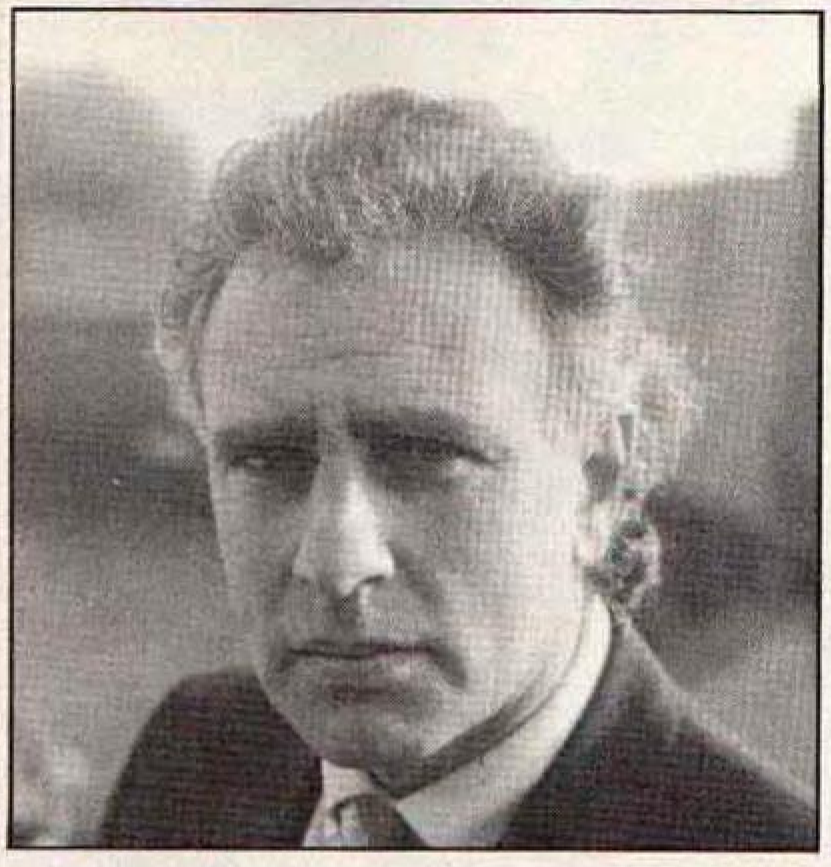
Preview 2: Fornax and Gath

The newly released *Marsport* (this month's Mastergame review) is but the first of three games collectively titled The Seige of Earth Trilogy. They're linked by a scenario spanning 500 years of earth's future history, but the actual games themselves are to have very different formats.

Whereas *Marsport* continues the the sideways scrolling views of *Dun Darach*, the second game *Fornax* is planned as a 'mixed media' game. Instead of just controlling the physical movements of an onscreen character, you'll also be able to make much more complex decisions using a system of 'icons' (picture symbols). Although this has been done before, notably in the Beyond game *Shadowfire* (sadly not yet available for the Amstrad), Gargoyle believe they can add a whole new dimension to the genre by mixing in animation as well.

The setting for *Fornax* is some 200 years after *Marsport*, and mankind remains under seige from the evil Sept aliens. However earth's spy networks have revealed that the seige can be broken if only the location of the imperial planet can be found. This secret can be apparently be uncovered on the planet of Fornax. To uncover it, the inhabitants of the planet must be won over, including a caste of scientists and a race of mutating humans. This then is the aim of the game. There are a number of different characters involved, and you have to persuade them to do what you want them to do to get anywhere. 'We think we can make these characters genuinely intelligent and interactive,' says Follis.

Fornax is due for release in January, and if you complete it you'll discover that the evil imperial planet is Gath, the setting for the third game and the final battle to free mankind.



▶ Ted Heathcote: "We've got to compete"

Quote...unquote

ROY CARTER's response to good programs produced by Gargoyle's competitors: *'This industry needs good products. You must maintain the interest of computer owners. There are a lot of companies writing very good software.'*

On the relative complexity of games vs business software: *'In what we're producing there are far more decision points than in most business programs. From that point of view it's more sophisticated.'*

GREG FOLLIS on the difference between British and American software houses: *'Even though I believe Britain is miles ahead in software terms, in the marketing side we're miles behind. I think the strict division over here between business and home software is thoroughly artificial. Did you know that in the States there's a flourishing market for games on the IBM PC?'*

On the reported end of the home computer boom: *'It'll never go away. The techniques and the equipment and the hardware will change. But the idea of electronic computerised entertainment is here to stay.'*

TED HEATHCOTE on whether Gargoyle might expand: *'At the moment there's an awful lot of clout in a few large software houses. We can't be as big as they are, but we do have to compete. We can't just dig in and say we are staying at this level.'*

On Roy Carter's programming: *'He's superb. His output is tremendous. He'll wrap up in days what would take most people weeks or months.'*



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ADVENTURE

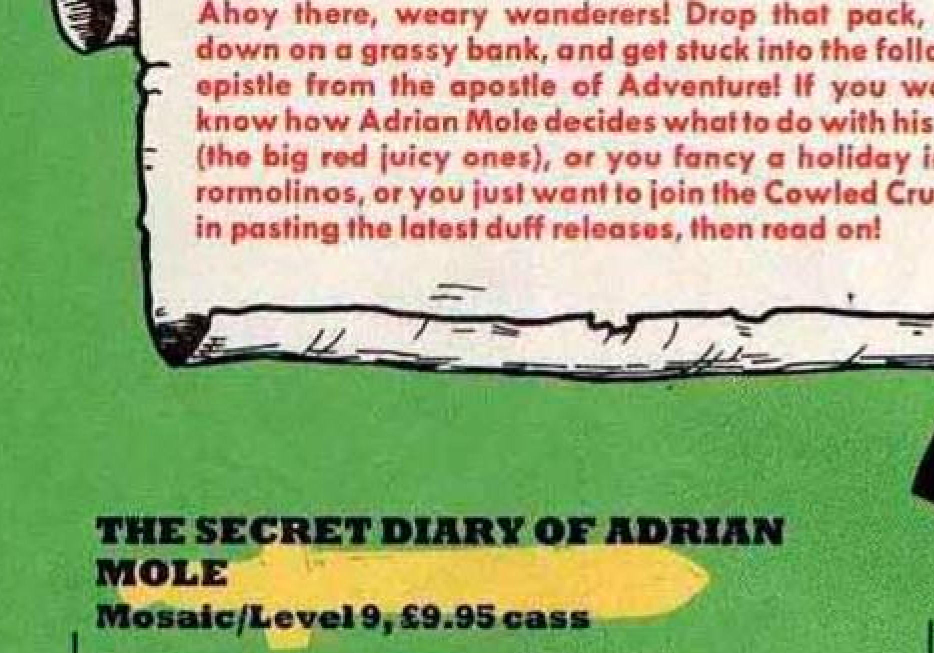


Ahoy there, weary wanderers! Drop that pack, settle down on a grassy bank, and get stuck into the following epistle from the apostle of Adventure! If you want to know how Adrian Mole decides what to do with his spots (the big red juicy ones), or you fancy a holiday in Terrormolinos, or you just want to join the Cowled Crusader in pasting the latest duff releases, then read on!

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE

Mosaic/Level 9, £9.95 cass

I think just about everyone must have come across Sue Townsend's books about this infamous school-boy by now. His daily exploits, as reported by the lad himself in the form of short, but very amusing entries in his diary, have sold umpteen mega-millions of copies around the world. Doubtless this game will add to the various bank balances concerned, and also divert some of the moulah into the pockets of Mosaic, who publish it, and Level 9, who programmed it.



▶ Adrian Mole may be a best-selling author, but his pics are a bit obscure...

Unlike *Erik the Viking*, another book spin-off done by Level 9 for Mosaic, this little number isn't really what I'd call a true adventure – it must, however, be the closest thing to a computerised book I've yet come across. The statistics are pretty staggering – Level 9 have made a Mole-hill out of a mountain by compressing 220K of text (about 37000 words by my reckoning) into four separate loads from cassette. 50% of this is completely new material, written by Pete Austin of Level 9 – and all I can say is that if Sue Townsend ever wants a holiday, she should get Pete to stand in for her – most of the new material is very amusing, very Mole-ish, and quite undetectable as being the work of a third-party.

The top of the screen shows some rather rudimentary, but quite colourful graphics – though if you've got a green screen you may find yourself wondering what exactly some of them are supposed to represent. The various diary entries then scroll up the bottom half of the screen – they even keep scrolling while the pictures are drawing so you don't have to hang around.

The first impression one has on playing the game is that there isn't going to be anything to do except watch as diary entry after diary entry scrolls up the screen, pausing for you to push SHIFT after each screenful before scrolling relentlessly onward. It does, however, make very good reading – even if you think you know the books backward.

The format of the game is rather similar to the old Fighting Fantasy books, where at various points in the action you get a chance to select a course of action from a small list, usually of three options. Every so often, young Adrian pauses in his scribbling to face a crucial decision – should he squeeze his spots or put Savlon on them? Should he invite Pandora to join the Anti-Smoking group or not? These decisions then affect thecourse of action related in the diaries and also alter peoples opinions of him. The aim of the game is to get as high a score as possible by keeping everybody happy.

Unlike an ordinary adventure this game will, I presume, take more or less the same amount of time to play each time – depending, of course, on how fast you read the text and how quickly you decide on the various courses of action. These are presented quite frequently and do give the impression of having some effect on the plot. Pilgrim played the first episode several times and discerned a number of major changes in the storyline, though of course certain events crucial to the overall structure of the story (such as meeting Bert Baxter, the OAP) will recur each time.

One thing that may worry Amstrad owners who have read the books is whether or not there will be any real surprises in the

game. As it happens, I'm quite a fan of the Adrian Mole series, and have also seen the play – as well as watching it on television. Despite this, I was impressed by the way in which the game introduced new material while still retaining all the flavour of the original. That's not to say that a lot of the situations won't be familiar to Mole fans – but there are many unexpected twists, so you won't be able to sail through making the right decision each time, even if you know the books backwards.

Your score is frequently displayed (as an entry in the diary, of course) and is expressed as a percentage and an accompanying comment – along the lines of 'naughty boy' or 'polite youth'. The most I managed was 62%, but then I wasn't too keen on some of the more obvious suggestions designed to curry favour with Mum, Dad, and Mr Scruton the Headmaster. One point here, of course, is that when you're tired of trying to get the highest score, you could always play the game the other way round and try to get the lowest!

I suppose that in many ways this game isn't an adventure' at all – after all there are no locations to be explored, just sequences of events to be followed as they are related in hilarious Mole-ish prose. Whichever way you play, however, I reckon you'll find this a very worthwhile addition to your collection.

TOMB OF KUSLAK
Intrigue Software, £7.50 cass

Intrigue Software have gone for the traditional Egyptian tomb scenario in this game, and really it's a bit TOO traditional for the Pilgrim's liking. This is one of those games which is really just a version of 3D Monster Maze – you wander around a maze of tunnels trying to grab four treasures before finding your way out again.

The best thing about this game is the neatly-arranged display, which is shown here annotated by yours truly so that you can see



▶ *Tomb of Kuslak* – note the energy levels, which also display the energy of any foe you may currently be attacking. Also the attractive display of your location which tends, unfortunately, to look pretty similar whereever you happen to be.

exactly what's going on. Unfortunately, there isn't much variety in the program, which simply encourages you to wander round fighting with bats, wolves, skeletons, and suchlike in a very random and rather unexciting fashion. To call it 'a graphic and text adventure with over 240 locations' is, I'm afraid, very misleading – at least insofar as I understand the terms being used. If you like 3D Monster Maze then you'll probably get a kick out of this game, but most true-blooded adventurers will throw up their hands in despair.

The only thing I can really say in this game's favour is that it might go down well with young children, since there are only 4 commands to use (Get, Drop, Use, and Fight) plus the directions N,S,E,W,U,D, so you don't need to know how to spell in order to play. The game is a reasonable example of BASIC programming – the pictures draw quite fast and I suppose the whole thing goes to show what can be done in Locomotive BASIC – but I'm far from convinced that these points make it worth either the asking price (£7.50) or your experienced attention.

SOULS OF DARKON
Taskset, £8.90

Taskset started life in the arcade business, many moons ago, programming those machines you pump your 10p bits into in the arcade. Their early philosophy was to ensure that no-one could beat them when it came to slick musical effects and rip-roaring action. Something rather different is required for adventures, so I loaded up *Souls of Darkon* considerable interest.

I'm afraid to say, however, that the game didnt quite live up to the expectations I had of this excellent company. Darkon is a text and graphics game that enables complex inputs – but unfortunately it goes one step further and actually DEMANDS complex inputs! You really do have to choose your words with extreme care, and this isn't made easy by a program which, while it will list its (small) vocabulary for you, refuses to accept, say, 'Examine





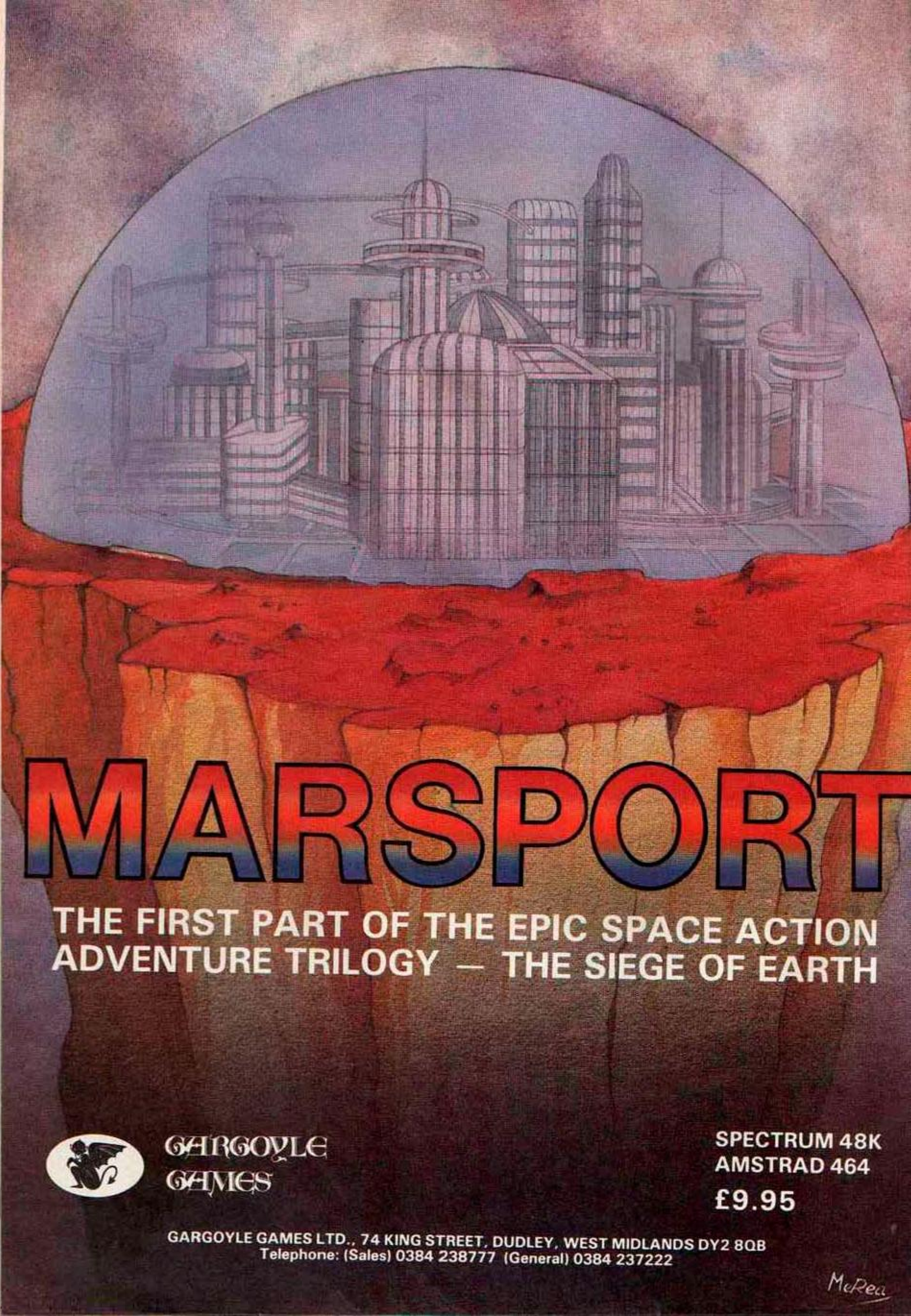
▶ *Darkon* graphics don't shed much light on what's going on in the game, but it's nice to have them all the same.

droid' but instead expects 'Examine Komputa droid'.

Sometimes this is just plain annoying, but at other times it can be downright misleading. Discovering a barrel of mead while carrying an empty bottle might prompt you to fill the bottle, but 'Fill bottle' gets the reply 'There's nothing to fill it with', which might well put you off, without discovering that if you type 'Fill bottle with mead' you'll achieve your aim.

Other shortcomings include some careless text-formatting – trying to give something to the guide, for example, gets the reply 'You guide says he does not want it'... and so on.

The aim of this game is to free the land from the evil Darkon, which isn't startlingly original, and I must say that after a while I lost


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patience with the tortuous input requirements and uninformative responses. This is a pity because the design of the game could have been better exploited - you get a convenient graphics window (but poor graphics), a loyal robot companion (who is hardly ever mentioned and is apparently totally unresponsive), and a painstakingly redesigned character set (which isn't very readable). Perhaps some more care and attention, plus better instructions as to how to address other characters and use the various commands might have helped as well. Meanwhile, though I'm always pleased to see someone else entering the adventure market, it's a pity that this game didn't sound a louder trumpet for the new arrivals.

ISLAND OF RIDDLES

Redbeard, £9.50 cass

Last month's mailbag included a letter from Mr Whittington of Redbeard Computers in Birmingham, asking me to review his latest game. The Pilgrim is delighted that people are taking me up on my offer to look at home-brewed adventures - Adventure International, Level 9 et al are all very well, but it's still nice to get to grips with a game on a more personal level.

This game is a text-only adventure in which you must escape from the Island of Riddles and, in doing so, discover a number of riddles hidden in various locations. Solving these riddles is not essential to solving the game, but could win you a prize - £1 will be deposited into a kitty for every game sold, and the whole kaboodle will be handed over to the first correct solution to all the riddle drawn out of a hat in July 1986.

As for the game itself, the descriptions are very short and the atmosphere is consequently a bit thin. What it lacks on these fronts, however, it makes up for by being - in places - EXTREMELY tricky. For example, there's a maze which you have to conquer before being able to explore any more than a dozen or so locations, and although The Pilgrim is accustomed to solving a few maze problems between mouthfuls at breakfast, I have to confess that Mr Whittington's little horror really put me to the test.

The problem is that there are 10 locations with identical descriptions in this accursed cavernous complex, and you only have about five objects to drop around the place to mark your position. It took the Cowled Crusader at LEAST five minutes to solve this puzzler (The TRUTH, Pilgrim, tell the TRUTH!)...okay, ten minutes...er...well, actually more like sixty minutes. And if you think THAT's tough, then take courage because there are more to come. *Island of Riddles* claims to have over 200 locations and I discovered at least one other maze before finally giving up to sit down and write this review.

However, the game does have some serious drawbacks - the parser is for two-word input only and can only reply 'You can't' or 'Please rephrase that' to your inputs. This can be very annoying at times. Also, the game costs £9.50, which I really think is a bit steep. However, if you fancy your chances at solving the riddles, want to spend hours wandering round caves, don't mind skimpy descriptions, and have got £9.50 to spare, drop Mr Whittington a line at 45 Regent Place, Birmingham, B1 3NB. And the best of luck - you'll need it.

TERRORMOLINOS

Melbourne House, £7.95 cass

This is the latest gem from Melbourne House, and a very nice little number it is too. It's written by the same jokey pair that gave us *Hampstead* - a silly satire that the Pilgrim didn't go for much, feeling that the humour was rather forced and in some cases as pretentious as the people it was supposed to be satirising.

Terrormolinos is, however, rather different. First, the game design is highly original. As a typical balding, middle-aged English holidaymaker you must first collect your family, your pills for 'gippy tummy', your knotted handkerchief, and a dozen other items needed for your holiday. You must then make it intact to your hotel in sunny Spanish Terrormolinos and - just to prove you've been there - take ten half-decent snapshots with your camera. Since there are only twelve exposures on the film, that doesn't leave you with much margin for error, so you have to be careful where and when you press the button.

This game, like *Hampstead*, was originally designed using *The Quill*, though I couldn't see any mention of this on the packaging. Although the Pilgrim can see that Melbourne House have done a lot of polishing up, I still think that Gilsoft should get a mention somewhere. As it is, there are still some hangovers from the game's origins - in particular a tendency for the program to hang up for short periods of time while it does something complicated - like think of something to print on the screen.



The game itself is beautifully put together. Take your family, for example. Wife Beryl, and kids Little Doreen and Ken have a delightfully infuriating habit of following you around the place but never, of course, being there when you realy need them. What's more, the game is structured in some places so that you not only have to solve the puzzles, but you have to solve them very quickly - the obvious example being right at the beginning, when a taxi is waiting outside to whisk you off to the airport. If you don't ginger things up a bit, you'll find yourself left stranded at home and having to start from scratch all over again.

The Quill interpreter isn't very clever when it comes to inputs. For the most part, you can only enter short verb-noun commands. Again, it's to the credit of the designers that this does not, except on one or two occasions, hinder the development of the plot or the solving of puzzles.

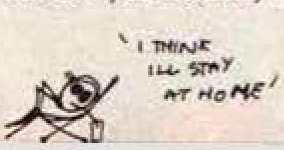
The graphics, which the authors claim were developed using Saucyvision (a system inspired by seaside postcards), aren't too bad and draw very quickly. They're also cleverly used when you take photographs, so you can see the snaps in glorious technicolour. They do not, as in most games, illustrate particular locations but instead, like illustrations in a book, portray specific events... yes, you DO look silly with a jar of pickle smashed over your head - serve you right for trying to get the camera off the kitchen shelf without climbing the steps first!

If you fancy a Spanish holiday, this game should satisfy the most masochistic of tourists... just watch out for the bulls, and remember that No Entiendo is Spanish for... yes, you guessed it, 'I don't understand'.

MINDSHADOW

Activision, £9.99 cass

Something of a surprise, this game. The Cowled Crusader first delved into its mysteries when it came out on the Commodore 64 as a disc-only release. Although it had a number of good points, it



never seemed to really catch on – so it's a very pleasant surprise to see it running on Arnold.

At the beginning of the game, you find yourself on a desert island, a place that you'd be forgiven for thinking was rather familiar. Desert islands seem to be a popular location with adventure programmers, but in *Mindshadow* there's a twist – the island is only the stepping-off place for a tour of numerous locations around the world as you try to work out what the game is all about – very necessary because you're not given much in the way of hints, except that your mission is, initially, to find out who you are...

However, the best things about *Mindshadow* are the graphics, the inputs, and some unusual playing options. The graphics are excellent – almost full-screen, with a scrolling text window beneath. They draw quickly and add considerably to the game, to the extent that in some locations you will need to examine them carefully to check the contents of a location.

Input is complex but straightforward – in other words, you can give things to people, perform multiple commands, and so on. The latter facility is most useful when combined with movement, so by entering N.N.E.N.S you could quickly cross five locations to reach your desired destination (providing, of course, that you'd already mapped the relevant area).

Unusual options include the 'Think about...' option, which allows you to ponder some of the trickier puzzles and occasionally gives some insight into the situation. Then there's a large bird who answers your cries for 'Help' (if you make them). This extraordinary vulture-like creature – supposedly a condor – appears on screen bearing words of wisdom which, unfortunately, don't usually help at all! Finally, there's something called the 'living tutorial', which is simply a guide to playing adventures. I say simply, but it is in fact highly comprehensive and certainly of great use to novice players. The advice it gives covers many adventuring skills and would be of help in solving any game – not just *Mindshadow*. Unfortunately, there was some doubt at Activision as to whether they would be including this file on the tape when it goes on sale.

Mindshadow is an excellent game. With approximately 80 locations, advanced players may find it slightly too easy, but it exudes programming professionalism and is well worth a look. The Pilgrim, for one, looks forward very much to Activision's next adventure release.

	Atmosphere	Interaction	Challenge	AA-Rating
Tomb of Kuslak	32%	18%	12%	22%
Souls of Darkon	59%	45%	62%	58%
Diary of A. Mole	83%	-	-	80%
Terrormolinos	78%	60%	75%	77%
Mindshadow	70%	82%	68%	75%
Island of Riddles	52%	42%	70%	58%

The Pilgrim Peeks... The Pilgrim Pokes...

Here, as promised in the last issue, is the routine to dump *Robin of Sherwood* to disc – a boon for weary Pilgrims who are fed up with watching their hair turn grey while waiting for the game to load. Running it is simplicity itself – just pop a *Robin* cassette in your tape unit and rewind it to the beginning. Make sure your disc drive is all set up, with a properly formatted disc in the drive to receive the file. If you have other programs on the disc, make sure there's at least 42K free (use the CAT command to check) – this is the space needed for the *Robin* file.

Next, ensure you have a 'clean' machine by switching it on and off, then enter the following program and RUN it. The screen will clear and, if you haven't already done so, you should depress the PLAY key on the tape at this point – you will NOT be prompted to do so by the program. The program will then read through the files until it finds the right one, load it, and then save it to tape. At one point in the proceedings, you'll see pretty patterns appearing on your screen – this is quite normal and is, in fact, the first block of the ROBIN file being temporarily stored in the screen memory.

When the tape has loaded and the program been saved to disc, the Ready prompt will reappear – switch off the machine, switch it on again, and you will now and henceforth be able to run *Robin of Sherwood* from disc simply by typing RUN "ROBIN1". If you have any problems, check that you have entered the numbers in the DATA line correctly – the slightest mistake could have some very unpredictable results!

Next month, we'll transfer Melbourne House's *Classic Adventure*.

```
10 |DISC: MEMORY &A608: address=&A610
20 READ b: IF b<>300 THEN POKE address,b:
address=address+1: GOTO 20
30 CLS: |TAPE.IN: CALL &A616
40 DATA 82,79,66,73,78,49,62,255,205,107,188,6,6,33,16,166,17,
0,208,205,119,188,33,192,0,205,131,188,205,122,188,6,6,33,16,
166,17,0,208,205,140,188,62,2,1,192,0,17,64,165,33,192,0,205,
152,188,205,143,188,201,300
```



The Pilgrim's Post

Greetings, fellow travellers, and a sincere thank you from the Weary Wanderer for all your letters. Roger Wilson's letter in particular touched my heart – why don't I have bar-charts for rating games like the ones in the rest of the magazine, he asks.

'Is it something Peter Connors (sic) has against you and your kind? Why don't you sack him for being a racist? Have a word in Chris Anderson's ear – I'm sure he will listen to a Pilgrim.' If only they would, Roger, if only they would...but as far as the bar charts are concerned, I wanted to make it quite clear that in this section of the magazine we are dealing with quite different games from yer-average-arcade-game – adventures get special treatment here. What do other readers think? I reckon the rating system we use is pretty comprehensive, but some of you may have other suggestions...

I've never fancied Hobbits much myself (I really do think they might shave between the toes), but Fred Gourlay obviously can't stand them! 'I would argue', he argues, 'about including that nasty little Hobbit in Pilgrim's Pick. I would not recommend this program to anyone, not even to devout Tolkien fans. Not that it's a bad program, but I can't keep it in my computer for more than half an hour before it crashes – and from what I've heard this is nothing unusual.' Quite right there, Fred. Hobbit-bugs filled the pages of many magazines for months after the program was released, but these were all on the Spectrum version. One of the most notorious occurred when trying to climb into the barrel before being thrown into the river – this often led to a spectacular system reset, and the program being thrown into the bin. Pilgrim would be interested to here of Amstrad Hobbit-bugs – drop me a line, Bilbos...and I won't mention the toes again – promise.

Swervin (pardon?? – SWERVIN?? Is this really your name?) sends in some hot tips on *Red Moon*, which the Pilgrim has borrowed from in this month's Clue Pot, so get sniffing all you Red Mooners and thank the Rt. Hon. Swervin for your salvation.

A very impressive missive arrived from the Ranger – who may or may not be related to Swervin (I somehow doubt it, but you can never tell with these anonymous types). This letter was either cooked in an oven or written on ancient parchment. Elegantly sealed with ye olde candle wax, it fair took the Pilgrim's mind back to days of yore when envelopes were not self-sealing and first-class letters took only six weeks to arrive. It is reproduced here before its auction at Sotheby's – and yes, Ranger, I agree that *Snowball* is rather TOO complex at the beginning, but then some like it hot right from the word go.

And now for an innocuous question from someone with an illegible name, but which I think may be Paul Berreclogh? 'Where have all the text-only adventures gone?' asks Paul. Hmmmm... This set the Pilgrim's mind a-turning, especially when I got another letter, this time from Margaret Austin of Level 9, which reads as follows: 'Many wholesalers and shops will only stock adventure games that have pictures...' and goes on to point out that, for example, for Atari owners, *Red Moon* is the first Level 9 game they have been able to buy off the shelves because it is the first with graphics.

The truth is that the market seems to have got it into its head that only graphic adventures will sell. Now, the Pilgrim reckons that this may be true of the Spectrum and Commodore 64 markets, but is it really true of the Amstrad adventurer that he/she demands graphics at all costs? I'd really like to iron this one out with all you lot out there, so do please write in and let me know what you think about 'pics 'n' prose' games. And in the meantime, even if the shops won't stop them, the Pilgrim will remain faithful to the text-only game and continue to give it good coverage. I have strong feelings on this subject, but let's hear yours as well...

Finally, a very honourable mention to Paul and Clare Wilkins of Bristol who sent in some very attractive maps of *Forest of the World's End* and *Heroes of Karn*. I'm not going to print them just yet, because it will give rather too much away, but we may well use them in a future issue. Mr T. Avery of Wareham also sent in some very professional maps, of *Message from Andromeda* and *Forest at the World's End* – seems the end of the world is a busy place these days. Many thanks for these contributions – anyone else out there got any maps?

That just about wraps it up for this month. Don't forget, the Cowled Crusader may never have been to school, but he can read, write, and even reply – so keep those epistles coming in. Modem owners can even get me via BT Gold or some of the better known bulletin boards – more details in the next ish.

Clue Sniffing with The Pilgrim

Here are some hot tips for this month, including some cryptic clues sent in by the winners of our competition. Don't forget that if you're well and truly stuck in a game, and the clue you need isn't there or in a previous issue of the magazine, then check out the Lords of Adventure – there may well be someone there who can help you.

WARLORD
Need help? This may be a corny problem, but try the bird.

FOREST AT THE WORLD'S END
Going up the wall? Smith's word may help with a touch.
A quick toot to a watcher might get you down.

CLASSIC ADVENTURE
Trouble with snakes? A flute might help – then get a bird and hope...(Pilgnote – adopting *Colossal Cave* tactics with the snake in Melbourne House's version will get you into trouble!)

GREMLINS
Bored? Try the movies.

RETURN TO EDEN
If you've got an explosive problem at the start, try sleeping on it.
Try the soap packet for a free offer.



THE LORDS OF ADVENTURE

Hail the Lords of Adventure! Bow down at their feet, you miserable lot out there, and beg for their assistance in times of toil and woe – and if you're too proud to do that, then get off your backsides and write in to join them! Everlasting fame awaits those intrepid Arnold-venturers who communicate with the Pilgrim, offering help to those less fortunate than themselves.

How to Achieve Pilgrimortality:

If you've killed the wizard of Zarn, tickled Smaug's underbelly, or achieved distinction in any Amstrad adventure, then post off a card to the Pilg with your name and address, stating clearly which games you are offering to help others on. You can also include your phone number if you're feeling particularly sociable, but bear in mind that you may receive many calls, so if you share the house with others (your parents, friends, pet balrogs etc) make sure you check with them first.

Emerald Isle, The Hobbit, Gems of Stradus, Return to Eden, Ring of Darkness
P.M. & J.G. Pancott, 78 Radipole Lane, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9RS
Tel: Weymouth 784156

The Hobbit, Message from Andromeda
Mark Vickers, 291 Marlhill Close, Offerton, Stockport, SK2 5PL

ALL GAMES
Tony Treadwell, 17 Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, Tel: Oxford 68637

CRIES FOR HELP

The Pilgrim often receives cries for help through the post, and does his best to answer them where possible, either through the Clue Sniffing column or by replying personally. However, I'd be most grateful if fellow pilgrims would check the Lords of Adventure column before getting in touch with me – and even then, I cannot absolutely guarantee a personal reply, and certainly not without some delay.

This is, I'm afraid, a perennial problem with adventure columns, and the Cowled Crusader is working hard at finding ways for adventurers to get together and help each other. Adventure started life as a group activity and it would be sad if fellow Pilgrims found themselves alone at the keyboard with no-one to swap yarns with.

Meanwhile, if you have a modem, there is more hope for you – the Pilgrim is currently setting up a special dial-in bulletin board service for fellow adventurers. You can also contact me via Telecom Gold – more news about this in the next red-hot Christmas instalment of the Pilgrim Chronicles.

ADVENTURE NEWS

Oh boy, oh boy! Forget the snow and ice, this Christmas looks like being the hottest season yet for Amstrad adventurers. Just look what there is coming up...

Locomotive Blockbuster

Locomotive Software, who as you must know are responsible for Arnold's excellent operating system, have turned their skills to adventuring and produced what Amsoft call 'the most sophisticated text adventure yet'. The Pilgrim is doubtful whether it beats the world-beating American company Infocom (of whom more in a later issue), but he does think highly of Locomotive and reckons that *Murdac* (for such it is) should be worth a second look. Amsoft are also bringing out a version of Micromega's *Kentilla*, originally released on the Spectrum and an old favourite of the Cowled Crusader. Both games will be £8.95 on cassette and £12.95 on disc.

Four from AI

Four games in the offing and every one sounds like dynamite – just cop a load of this:

Seas of Blood, a full-blown pics'n'prose extravaganza with 200 locations and graphics for every one. The game is based on the Fighting Fantasy series from Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson, and there is already a follow up planned... *Fantastic Four*

The Human Torch and The Thing star together in *Questprobe III* – the latest blockbuster from the pen of the immortal Scott Adams. Go for it, True Believers!

Robin Hood II – a follow-up (as yet untitled) to the *Robin of Sherwood* best-seller, on which subject the Pilgrim penned much praise last month... and all this before Christmas! What more can you want, except the necessary £9.95 for each program?



Firebird Take Off

A whole new range of games from British Telecom's Firebird Sofware is planned for Christmas. Entitled the Hot Range, it will include the fabulous *Runestone* graphics adventure program, originally programmed for the Yecchtrum and advertised by Games Workshop – now to be released for the Arnold as well. The last GW program was very promising, and early previews of *Runestone* have been very exciting.

ADVENTURE CLUBS

Do you run an adventure club? Or are you a member of an adventure club? If so, the Pilg wants to hear from you – drop me a line telling me all about the services offered, how much (if anything) they cost, how many members there are... etc etc. And if you're a member, let me know how you feel about the service you're being given.

Clubs can can come in all shapes and sizes – from meganational corporations down to just a few happy Pilgrims gathering together for a game of *Dungeons and Dragons* – whatever category you fall into, tell the Pilg – and undying fame on these pages could be yours!

Red Moon Giveaway!

The first ever Pilgrim Column offered readers the chance to walk away with free copies of *Red Moon* from Level 9 – all you had to do was send in a cryptic clue (like the ones in the Pilgrim's Clue Pot) – the 10 cleverest clue sniffers would win.

Entries flooded in from around the world and now, after light-years of intensive debate, members of the Pilgrims Union of Knight Errants are delighted to announce the following winners:

Andrew Monaghan, Dundee
Ian Harrison, Accrington
Thomas Higgins, Glasgow
Ye Pancotts, Weymouth
T Gurney, Bethesda
Linda Wright, Tring
Christopher Winstanley, Preston
Stewart McCone, Pontefract
D Griffiths, High Wycombe
and an ANONYMOUS entry from Sutton-on-Sea!

We particularly liked the following little ditty from P & J Pancott, concerning *Ring of Darkness*:

You must go down into the deep,
To earn some gold and points to keep,
But Jelly may dissolve your mail,
And that could easily make you frail
So take some UPs, be not forlorn,
Go right on down and slay that GORN!

Next month

***Terrormolinos* is just one of many games written on *The Quill* and published by a major software house. Could you do the same? Next month we bring you all the essential information you need on using an adventure generator program to write your own games and sell them at a vast profit... We'll be looking at adventure generator systems from Gilsoft – *The Quill* + *Illustrator*; Incentive, whose latest program enables you to generate complex text and graphics adventures with complex inputs AND text compression; and a new adventure creating program from CRL. If you want to try your hand at writing a best-seller, you can't afford to miss the Pilgrim's Guide to Profitable Programming – book now, or remain obscure forever!!**



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So you've read all the reviews, and you're just DYING to get your hands on some of that software, right? Grieve not, dear friend. To coin a phrase, we have the power to help you.

You can buy ANY of the range of Amstrad games reviewed in this issue simply by popping off an envelope to our Aladdin's Cave mail order warehouse. What's more, by collecting our special vouchers – the first one's printed on this page – you can save yourself sums of money ranging from not-to-be-sneezed-at 50p's to gosh-wow-absolutely-unbelievable pounds and pounds.

Basically, each voucher entitles you to a 5% discount off your total order – and depending on how many games you buy, that itself could be quite a saving. But you can also collect the vouchers from different issues to increase the discount you're entitled to. Two vouchers equals 10%, three is 15%, and four will give you the maximum 20% discount. That means you can save a full £2 on a single full-priced piece of software. Not bad going, eh? The savers table shows exactly what savings you're entitled to, and as you can see it contains some pretty big numbers. What's more you DON'T have to add anything for post, packing or VAT. It's all included.

So all you have to do is fill out the order form, and send it to the address below together with your cheque or postal order and any vouchers for which you are claiming a discount. Then just sit back and wait for that parcel...

How to use this table

The table allows you to calculate what discount you are entitled to if you enclose vouchers with your order. All you have to do is round up to the nearest pound the total (pre-discount) cost of the software you're buying. Find this figure on the top row of the table and then read down to see what discount you can claim for one, two, three and four vouchers.

EXAMPLE: Suppose you have ordered two games costing £8.95 each. The total pre-discount cost is £17.90. This rounds up to £18. This month you could only send in a single voucher, so reading down from the £18 figure in the top row you will see that you are entitled to a 90p discount. That'll just about buy you next month's slice of Amstrad Action.

Savings table

Total cost of software pre-discount:	£2.00	£3.00	£4.00	£5.00	£6.00	£7.00	£8.00	£9.00	£10.00	£11.00	£12.00	£13.00	£14.00	£15.00	£16.00	£17.00	£18.00	£19.00	£20.00
One voucher	£0.10	£0.15	£0.20	£0.25	£0.30	£0.35	£0.40	£0.45	£0.50	£0.55	£0.60	£0.65	£0.70	£0.75	£0.80	£0.85	£0.90	£0.95	£1.00
Two vouchers	£0.20	£0.30	£0.40	£0.50	£0.60	£0.70	£0.80	£0.90	£1.00	£1.10	£1.20	£1.30	£1.40	£1.50	£1.60	£1.70	£1.80	£1.90	£2.00
Three vouchers	£0.30	£0.45	£0.60	£0.75	£0.90	£1.05	£1.20	£1.35	£1.50	£1.65	£1.80	£1.95	£2.10	£2.25	£2.40	£2.55	£2.70	£2.85	£3.00
Four vouchers	£0.40	£0.60	£0.80	£1.00	£1.20	£1.40	£1.60	£1.80	£2.00	£2.20	£2.40	£2.60	£2.80	£3.00	£3.20	£3.40	£3.60	£3.80	£4.00

IMPORTANT

▶ If you send in more than one voucher they must be from DIFFERENT issues of the magazine – in other words the maximum discount this month is 15% ▶ The games reviewed in this issue include details of price and disk-version availability. Although we've tried to ensure these details are accurate, we can't be held liable for any errors which have crept in.

▶ If you want the disk version of a game, you must mark this clearly on the order form – otherwise you'll get a cassette. Do check first that a disk version exists, and ensure you have the right price for it.

Post your completed order to: Amstrad Action Mail Order, Units 10/11, Imperial Studios, Imperial Road, London SW6. Telephone: 01-731-4607

URGENT ORDER...URGENT ORDER...URGENT ORDER...URGENT ORDER...

Name ....

Address ....

Telephone (if possible) ....

I would like the following titles:

Game	Software house	Retail price
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Total cost pre-discount:...................

Amount of discount as revealed by Savings Table (only allowed if voucher(s) enclosed):

Amount payable (total cost minus discount):

I enclose a crossed cheque or postal order for the Amount Payable made out to Amstrad Action Mail Order. Please rush me the software.

COMPETITION

BEACH-HEAD II

The Battle re-commences. It's 1947 and the evil Dictator is holed up on a Pacific island, eating paw-paw and keeping people prisoner. JB Stryker has to get in there and zap him once and for all. There are five stages in this follow-up to to Beach-Head, giving you a wide range of shoot-'em-up action.

To win a copy of this exciting game all you have to so is say which islands are associated with the pictures below. If you think that funny animal comes from Iceland – and you'd be very wrong if you did think that – then write 1. Iceland. And so on. Once again, please write your answers on a postcard or the back of an envelope ONLY.

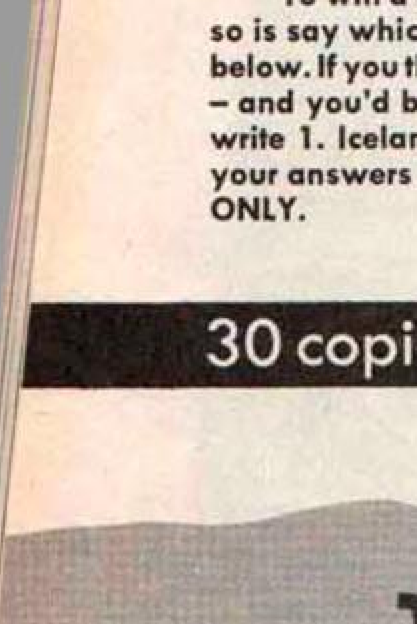




30 copies of the non-stop US Gold action game must be captur

Willow Pattern

30 copies of the fab Firebird game absolutely *must* be won in this competition of oriental love and bravery



It's not easy spending your life on a plate, buffeted by a million greasy knives and forks. No wonder you want to get that Princess and get out of there. And that's the object of this new Firebird game in the Super Silver range.

That lowly clerk Chang is pining for love of Princess Khoon-fhee. Trouble is, the nasty Mandarin her dad doesn't think much of Chang, even though he's passed all his 'O' levels. She's promised instead to an unsavoury pal of papa. Chang to the rescue, through mazes, encounters with warriors and puzzles over key objects. Get in, get the girl, get out and live happily ever after.

All you have to do to have a chance of snaring a copy is answer three simple-ish questions:

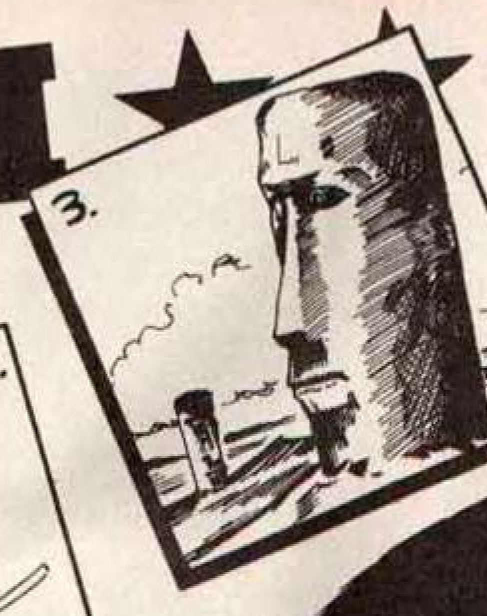


1 Where is the Temple of Heavenly Peace?
a Shanghai
b Peking
c Tokyo

2 A junk is
a An unintelligent person
b A ship
c a useless object

3 Oolong is
a a Chinese language
b a Chinese tea
c a Chinese form of martial arts

If you think the answer to question 1 is c, then write 1c, and so on. Answers on a postcard or the back of an envelope ONLY must reach us by December 16th.



Competition Entries

All three competitions have the same closing date – December 16th. Put your entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope only. If you want to enter more than one competition, you must send separate entries and mark them clearly. The address for all three competitions is **Amstrad Action, Valeside, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS**

MINDSHADOW – the mystery

75 copies of Activision's intriguing adventure can be won in our great Spot the Celebrity competition.

What is to be done

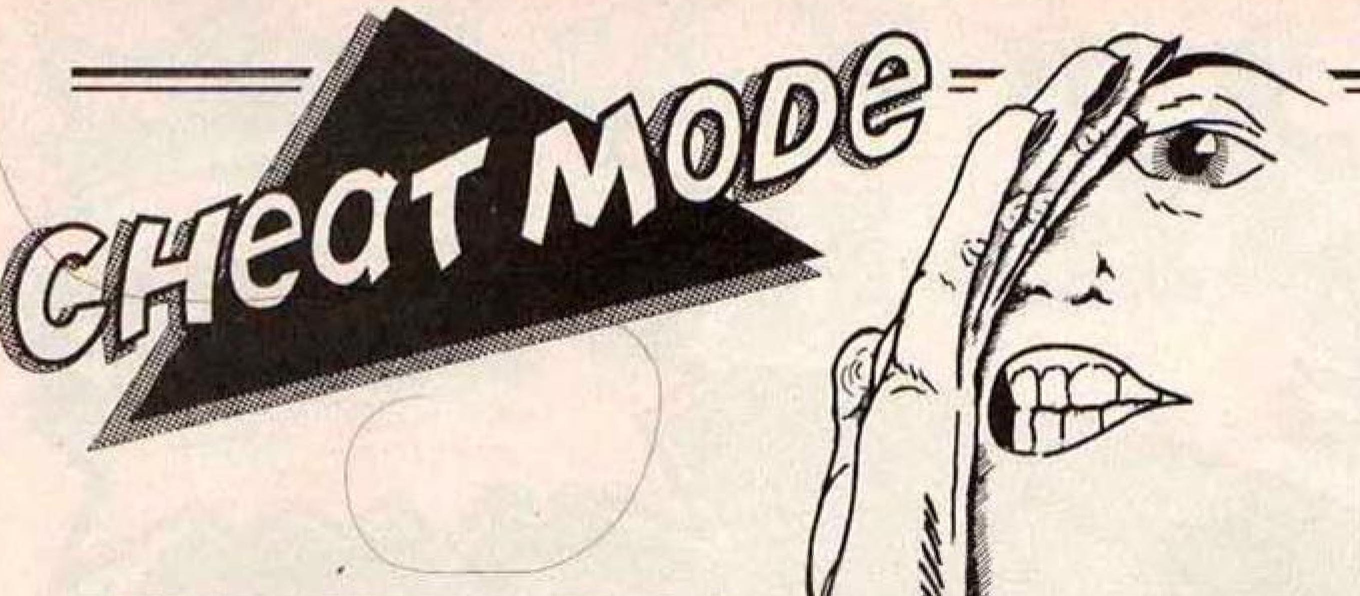
Mindshadow casts you up on a deserted beach. You don't know where it is. You don't even know who you are. You set off an journey to find your identity, a journey full of traps and puzzles.

My competition isn't as difficult as that. I'm presuming that you yourselves have a fair idea of your own identity. But do you know who these people are? Each of the three is given a short description. All you have to do is say who they are. So if you think description 1 belongs to Margaret Thatcher, just write 1. Margaret Thatcher. Answers, on a postcard or back of an envelope ONLY, must reach us by December 16.

1. Although his football team is in the north country, he plays a bat and ball game in Amstrad Action country. Streaked his hair on signing a lucrative contract.

2. His dark curly hair and smiling bearded face have appeared in these pages. He's come along way from flogging perspex hi-fi lids.

3. She's of a certain age, yet still glamorous enough to make a lot of money out of soap after that clumsy fellow spilt his Cinzano down her frock.



The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation

Raid Tactics

***Raid* is a game with plenty of potential for high scoring. Our very own Doctor Bob tells you everything you could need to know to get a high score.**

Hangar

This early part of the game is also one of the toughest but mastering it is essential for a really high score. Each plane appears moving towards the left. Firstly rotate 180 degrees and thrust gently until the plane is only just moving right. Now go to maximum height and turn 90 degrees so you can apply a very little forward thrust. Release upward thrust and a second or two later open the doors. Just before the plane starts to lose height use full thrust straight out of the door.

This method minimises sideways drift which usually causes problems but still requires practice to get the timing right.

Always take out a total of six planes (if there is enough time and you don't crash any of them), as this gives you the opportunity for good scoring later on. On some launches you may not have time to take out that many but you'll have to judge the timing for yourselves. Whatever you do don't let one of your cities be destroyed or your score is zeroed – disaster!



The hangar stage is tough but there is a way out



The scrolling attack run, a real high scoring stage



Five silos to destroy and blast lots of planes, watch the time though

Attack run

Having got down to the launch site it's a case of shooting everything in sight. Take out the tanks, missiles and as many buildings as possible, finishing off with the helicopter. At the end of each run crash the plane on the final line of defences (or missile) until you have only one plane left out of the hangar. Take this one through to the silos – but woe betide you if you crash it.

Silos

Knock out the four small silos, getting a plane back for each one and then line yourself up on the fifth silo. Don't shoot it yet but blast away the enemy planes until there are 10 to 15 seconds before impact and then let the last silo have it. You should now have a full complement of planes again and be ready to face the next launch.

Repeat the procedure for the first three sections for each of the three launches until you are faced with the final attack run.

Defence centre attack

Complete this on the first run since pilots can no longer be rescued and each one is worth a bonus at the end. Once at the centre, shoot everything – towers, tanks, doors and men. The men will keep coming back so you'll have to be fast with them and keep moving or they'll home in on your position and let you have it.

Once you're inside the reactor using your discs to destroy it is down to timing – you either get it or you don't, practice is the only answer. Take as long as you like hitting the reactor the first four times but you'll need to be super-efficient for the next four. The best time to hit the reactor is while it's moving, but don't waste discs or lives and keep cool. In order to try to judge the timing count the pulses so that you can always throw and hit on a particular pulse.

The harder levels of the game get really nasty with the hangar exiting, attack run and everything else getting really mean. The same tactics can be applied to all three levels but the higher ones take that much more practice to perfect.

Oldie but Goldie Pokes

I've been sent most of the following pokes a number of times so let's not have them cropping up in the postbag again – otherwise I might send you a signed picture of the editor.

Roland in Time

Type in and RUN the program. Then load the game as prompted, to get infinite lives.

```
10 MEMORY 4999
20 LOAD "ROINTIME",5000
30 POKE 5850,167 (5001,1 if using
green screen)
40 CALL 5000
```

Roland goes Digging

Type in and RUN the listing and then follow instructions to get infinite lives.

```
10 MEMORY 17000
20 LOAD "digger1",17800
30 POKE 17978,0
40 CALL 18658
```

Roland on the Ropes

Input and RUN this listing then load the game as prompted, to give you infinite strength.

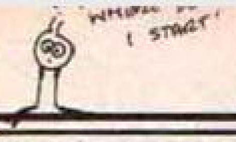
```
10 MEMORY 4800
20 LOAD "ROLAND.D"
30 LOAD "ROLAND.C"
40 POKE -25804,0:POKE -25562,0
50 CALL 41100
```

Hunchback

To get infinite lives, type in and RUN this listing then load the program as prompted.

```
10 BORDER 0:INK 0,0:INK
1,18:INK2,5:INK 3,25
20 ENT 1,100,2,2
```

GRID	ZONE	YEAR	PASSWORD
1	1	1858	Telegram
	2	1905	Relativity
	3	1985	Starion
	4	1980	Rhodesia
	5	1893	Aspirin
	6	1897	Diamond
	7	1967	EEC
	8	1831	Electricity
	9	1968	Bible
2	1	1815	Wellington
	2	0814	Egbert
	3	1883	Krakatoa
	4	1776	Seal
	5	1588	Armada
	6	1587	Axe
	7	1764	Coal
	8	1086	Preface
	9	1965	Leonov
3	1	1924	Hitler
	2	1783	Ballast
	3	1879	Lamp
	4	1942	Atom
	5	1547	Ivan
	6	1982	Spectrum
	7	1901	S
	8	1919	Treaty
	9	1889	Eiffel



```
30 ENT 2,90,-6,2
40 ENV 12,10,-2,10
50 PEN 2
60 MEMORY &3BFF
70 LOAD"HUN 3",&4C00
80 POKE &61F8,1
90 POKE &61F9,1
100 POKE &61F8+18,1
110 POKE &61F8+19,1
120 POKE &61F8+26,1
130 POKE &61F8+27,1
140 POKE 20762,0
150 CALL &5431
```

Pyjamarama

This one again gives infinite lives. Type in and RUN the listing and then load the game as prompted.

```
10 MEMORY 8191
20 LOAD""
30 POKE 16087,0
40 CALL 8192
```

Roland in the Caves

Not a poke this, but if you press the cursor down as you enter the cave you complete the level with mega score. Don't repeat this too often as the score may zero itself or the game crash. Control G also exits a level and Shift A goes to next screen with 100,000 points.

Electro Freddy

Not endless lives this time – just 255. Type in and RUN then follow the instructions.

```
10 MEMORY 10000
20
LOAD"A1":LOAD"":LOAD"":LO
AD"":LOAD""
30 POKE 39356,255
40 CALL 39323
```

Knight Lore

Christian Waymouth of Sheffield sent in this little marvel which gives you infinite lives, endless days and no change into a werewulf. Type it in and RUN it. Then hit ctrl, shift and escape to get game going from loading screen.

```
10 OPENOUT"D"
20 MEMORY 4351
30 LOAD"",4352
40 FOR T=1 TO 7:READ
A,B:POKE A,B:NEXT
50 CALL 4352
60 DATA
4363,0,4364,0,4355,0,4402,201,442
4,149,4425,255,4426,191
70 LOAD"",8192
80 POKE 18889,0
90 POKE 15438,0:POKE
15439,0:POKE 15440,0
100 POKE 15103,x (where x =
objects to be collected)
110 CALL 4414
```

Chuckie Egg

Also from Christian Waymouth comes an infinite lives poke for that most infinite of games. Type it in, RUN it and then load the game as prompted.

```
10 MEMORY 32767
20 LOAD"",32768
30 POKE 40175,255
40 CALL 39575
```

Roland in Space

Duncan Booth of Moss Pit tells me you don't need a poke to get infinite lives but just have to depress the keys Tab,E,G,J,K,< and M while on a planet to allow you to pass through any hazard and fall any distance.

Finder Keepers

Robert Frost also knows how to blow up cats – just get charcoal, sulphur and the magic flame, drop them in front of the cat and... wooooomph! Mr Sloan from Hewish tells us that you can make a bar of gold from the lead and philosopher's stone and excalibur by combining the blacksmith and broken sword.



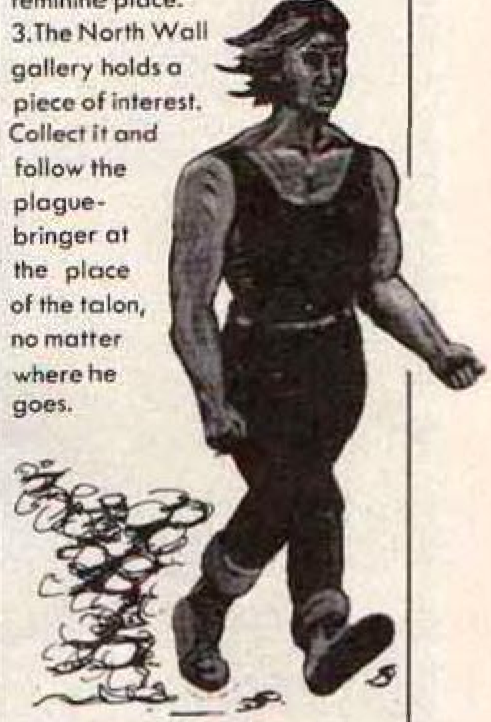
Nonterraqueous

Is Psyche drain giving you a headache? Then here's a little tip from Simon Brereton of Stoke-on-Trent. Go to the bottom of a horizontal screen and flick back and forward between two screens – your Psyche goes up by five every time you do. While we're on the subject, Gordon Scott has already mapped 384 rooms of the game – anybody done better? We would really love to see the whole thing. Jason Anderson has also found a pause feature not marked on the cassette inlay – H to pause, S to restart. Jason's stuck at the photon thrusters at level 21 though and wants to know where the rocket fuel is – anybody out there know?

Dun Darach

The Pilg's not the only one who can give cryptic clues. With some help from Lloyd McCormack of Salford and Mr W.A.Kusnierz of London here are some little posers to work out that may help those lost in Dun Darach.

1. Keep losing things? Then gain something interesting by swapping a drink (or spell to excite love) with the culprits.
2. It's not for a dog or TV but it gets something out of a muscular location and gets you into a feminine place.
3. The North Wall gallery holds a piece of interest. Collect it and follow the plague-bringer at the place of the talon, no matter where he goes.



4. Teth the jailer appreciates metal masterpieces.
5. Get some protection by soothing Dain's ears with sound.
6. Praise be to the place that starts with way – it reveals much when you surrender your defence.

STARION

We printed one grid of codes from the game last month but Sean Brady of Eltham has sent in the codes for the whole of block one – and he's working on the rest, so you'd better got a move on if you're going to beat him to it.

GRID PASSWORD	GRID	ZONE	YEAR	PASSWORD	GRID PASSWORD	GRID	ZONE	YEAR	PASSWORD	GRID PASSWORD
	4	1	1953	Everest		7	1	1773	Tea	
		2	1789	Cakes			2	1867	Nobel	
		3	1840	Penny			3	1756	Calcutta	
		4	1983	Avon			4	1851	Exhibit	
Redbreast		5	1986	Halley	Parachute		5	1812	Cannon	Eccentric
		6	2222	Umbrella			6	1922	Insulin	
		7	1888	Rubber			7	0163	Rosetta	
		8	1896	Aerial			8	1997	China	
		9	1565	Tobacco			9	1042	Edward	
	5	1	1885	Petrol		8	1	1796	Needle	
		2	0219	Alps			2	1912	Iceberg	
		3	0982	Eric			3	1969	Eagle	
		4	2001	Odyssey			4	1929	Crash	
Spacewalk		5	1949	Nato	Orphanage		5	1066	Arrow	Combinate
		6	1898	Radium			6	1953	Orb	
		7	1959	Hawaii			7	0543	Triangle	
		8	0035	Arp			8	1492	Bahamas	
		9	1895	Gillette			9	0004	Manger	
	6	1	0079	Vesuvius		9	1	1911	Pole	
		2	0064	Nero			2	0044	Ides	
		3	1897	Electron			3	1805	Nelson	
		4	1869	Table			4	1969	Boom	
Establish		5	1867	Alaska	Adventure		5	1900	Hydrogen	Amphibian
		6	1944	D			6	1454	Ink	
		7	1999	Eclipse			7	1837	Morse	The block
		8	1871	Ribbons			8	1914	Archduke	password is
		9	1945	Uranium			9	1682	Apple	Aerospace.

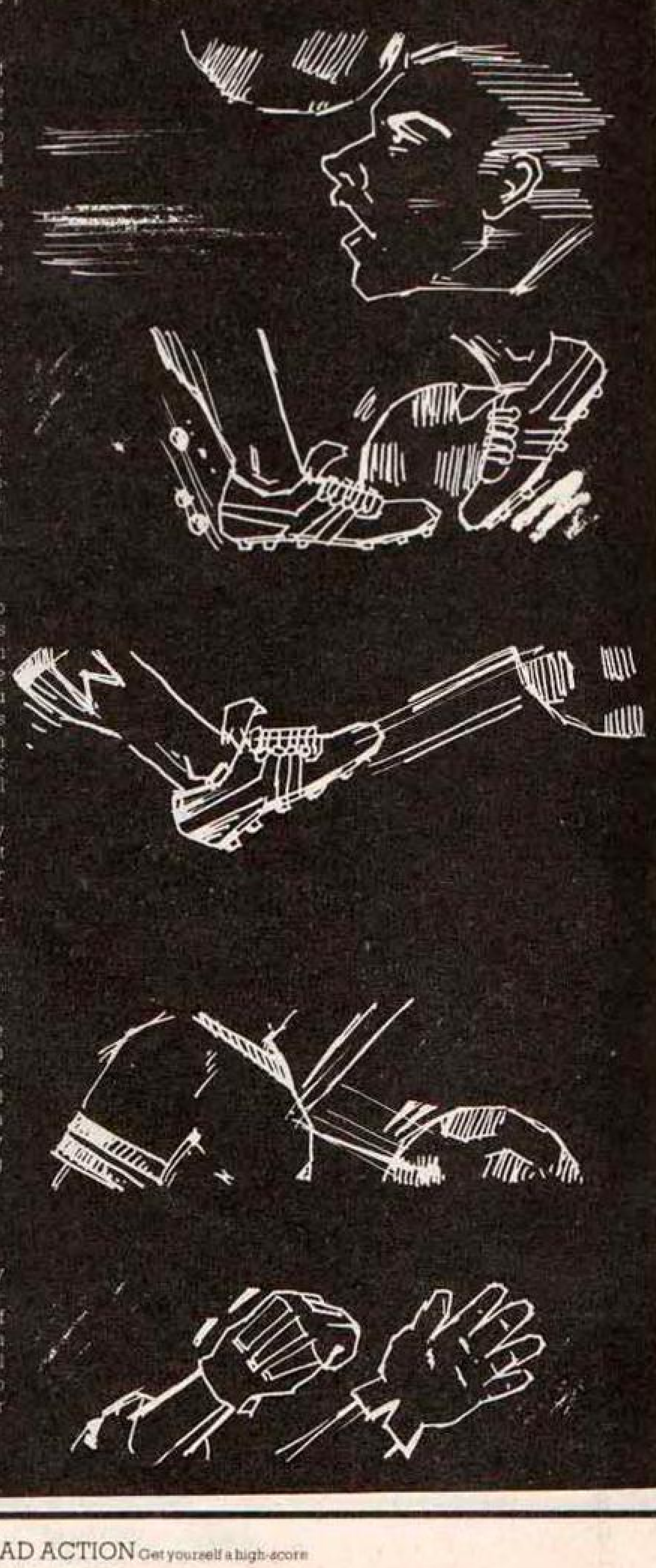
Combat Lynx Extra

In Issue 1 Robert White of Durell advised you never to attack gun emplacements – this month Robert Conacher of Leeds tells you how you can successfully destroy them.

Emplacements are found directly N,S,E or W of you. Load up with 2 mines and a heat seeker. Pause Lynx when 10 squares from gun and select mines. Switch to map screen and accelerate to full speed. Press fire button and keep it held down. As you pass over the gun depress M and you switch off the map instantly dropping the mine on the gun (cease firing). If you miss you've always got mine number two to have another try with.

Matchday Goal Bonanza

You-know-who has been at it again. In between scoring hatfuls of goals on *Matchday* Bob "I love playing games" Wade has provided a few tips to help anyone who might be suffering defeats at the hands of Rochdale or Halifax.



HEADING

This is a really stylish way of playing and scoring. When the ball is in the air going straight left or right down the field, try to bounce it off the player's head and then keep under it nudging it towards the opponents' goal. This way you can at least keep the ball safely away from your opponent even if you can't take it all the way to the goal.

INTERCEPTING PASSES

On the high levels of play the computer will trap a ball in the air on its first bounce. To gain possession you have to put yourself in the path of the ball and deflect it to the ground before it reaches the opposition. This should allow you to gain possession.

SHOOTING

The safest way of scoring is just to dribble the ball into the net. This often isn't possible though because of an opponent in close attendance. If he is between you and the goal you can either pass to another player or get into an angled position where a quick turn and fire to left or right will get the ball past him.

You don't need to worry about shooting over the bar but the danger is of hitting the post or going past it, so watch out for rebounds and intercepting wayward shots.

PASSING

This is most easily done along the ground from a standing position but results in interceptions. Passing in the air is harder to control when trying to regain possession but bouncing the ball off the body is the easiest way of gaining control.

GOALKEEPING

This is tough and it's best to rely on just outscoring your opponent. Dives are purely a matter of learning the timing and, if an opponent tries to dribble the ball in your only chance is to try to intercept with one of the other players.

Wizard's Lair

If you've been wondering where those magic lifts can take you then Robert Frost of Earls Barton can help you out. He's sent in the seven levels of the lair that you can be transported to.

1 = CAIVE
2 = HAWLO
3 = CRYPT
4 = DUNGN
5 = VAULT
6 = LIAYR
7 = LYONS

Wild Bunch

Robert Frost of Earls Barton has a handy tip for this Firebird cheapy – don't shoot the real murderer if you find him since he is your only witness.



Karl's Treasure Lost – and Found!

Confession time – we didn't get the *Karl's Treasure Hunt* poke quite right, so to make amends here's the correct method as supplied by Gordon Scott of Stourbridge.

Enter the line:

592 LIST

and then run the rest of the program. At the end of loading it will list the basic program and you can enter the line:

Memory 12288:poke 38102,100:call 36864

then just enter:

Goto 595

and away you go.

Amsgolf Again

Apparently I'm not the only Arnold owner who will have enjoyed Europe's Ryder Cup victory. Stuart Russell has been spending hours on *Amsgolf* to bring you the scratch handicap code. This will allow you to thwack the ball much further. Sandy Lyle couldn't do better than this.

Handicap 0 = K3R56

An Amstrad Action Mega-Map

MAPPED BY
Hewson Consultants Limited

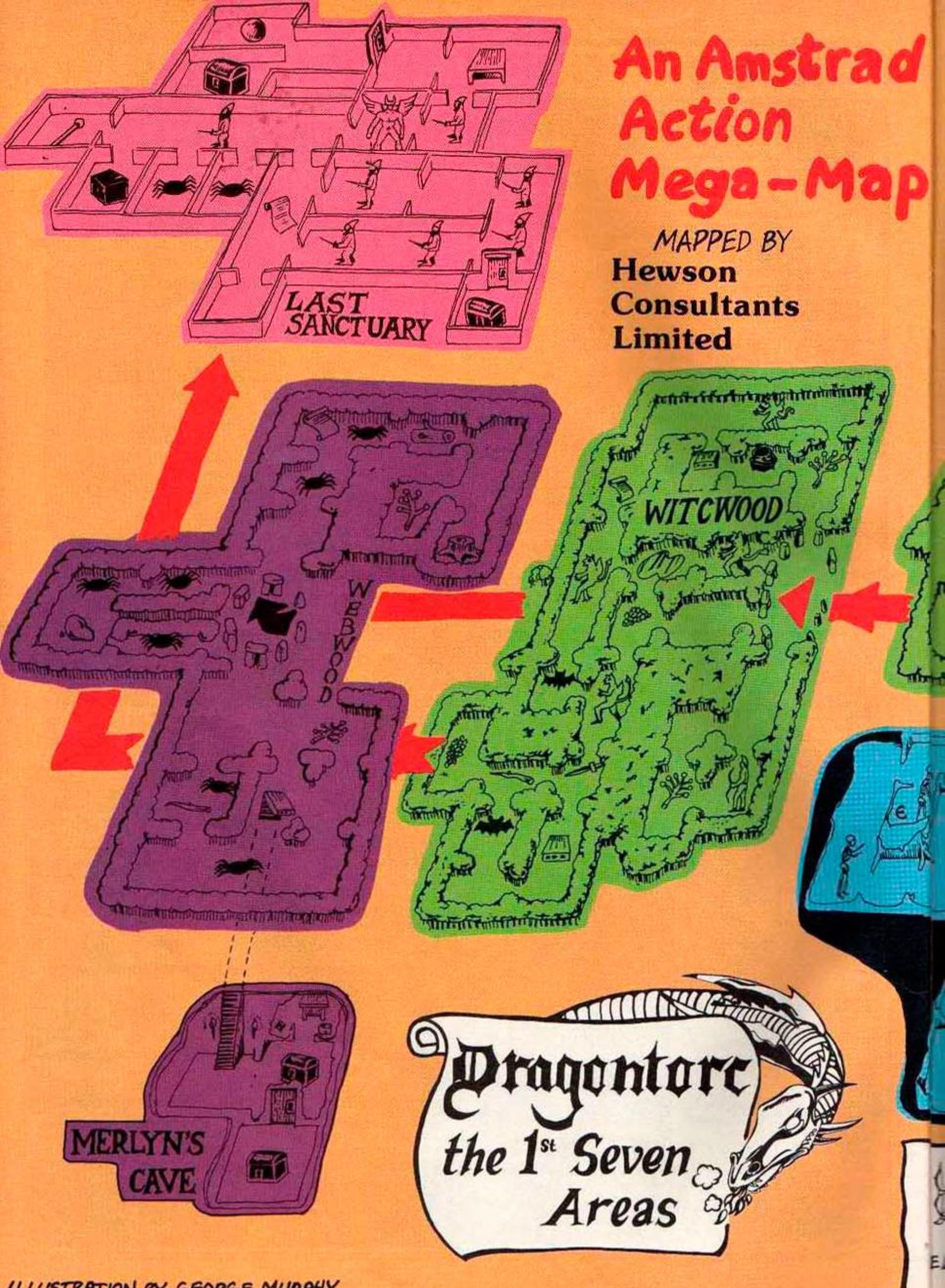
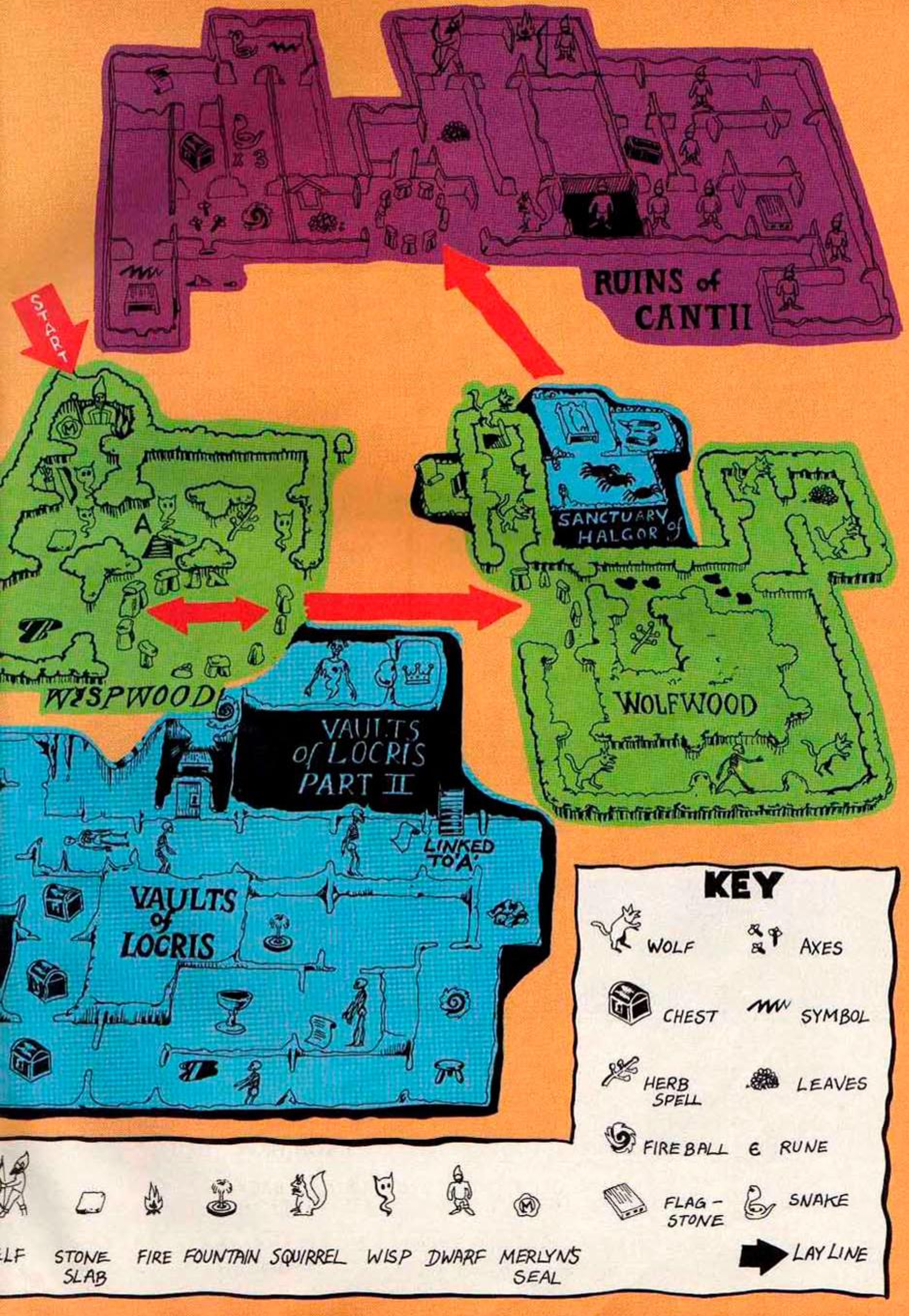
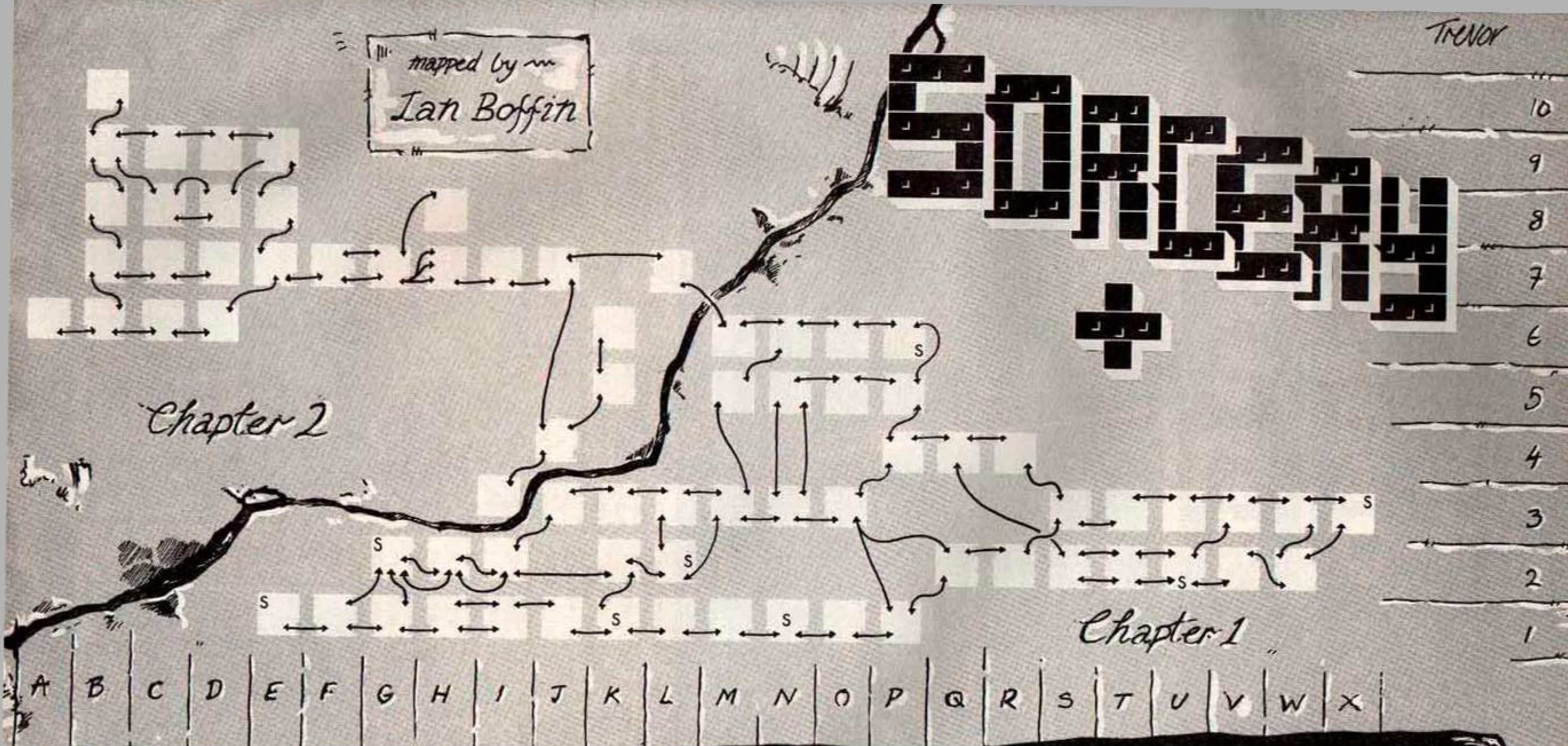


ILLUSTRATION BY GEORGE MURPHY.

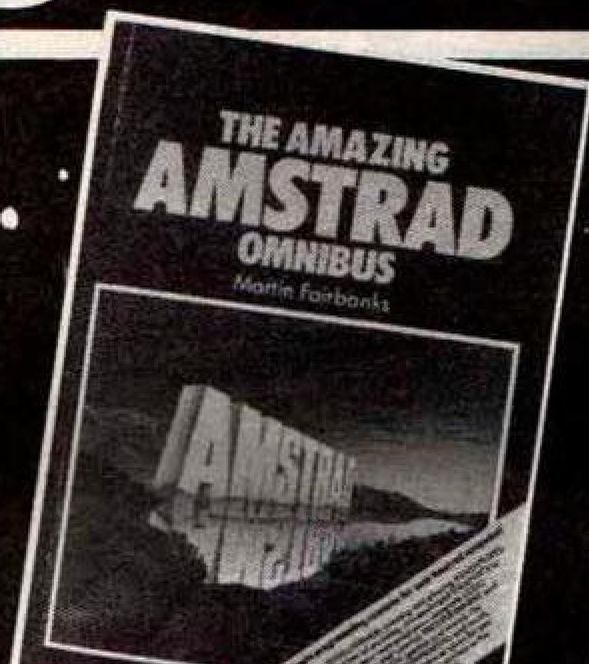


RUINS of CANTII
START
SANCTUARY of HALGOR
WISPWOOD
WOLFWOOD
VAULTS of LOCRIS PART II
LINKED TO 'A'
VAULTS of LOCRIS
KEY
WOLF
AXES
CHEST
SYMBOL
HERB SPELL
LEAVES
FIRE BALL
RUNE
FLAG-STONE
SNAKE
LAY LINE
LF
STONE SLAB
FIRE
FOUNTAIN
SQUIRREL
WISP
DWARF
MERLYN'S SEAL



A6 Just in time
B6 Deserted cellar
B7 Entrance to hideout
B8 Near hideout
B9 Near hideout
B10 Above the world
C6 Under the hall
C7 Near necromancer
C8 In armoury
C9 Above hideout
D6 Under hall
D7 Main hall
D8 Above hall
D9 Above hide
E1 Stonehenge
E7 Near hideout
E8 Near hideout
E9 Near hideout
F1 Near Stonehenge
F7 On the bridge
G1 Near stonehenge
G2 Wastelands
G7 On the bridge
H1 Tunnel mouth
H2 Wastelands
H7 Main gate
H8 Gatwick
I1 Tunnel mouth
I2 Wastelands
I3 Under gate
I7 Labyrinth
J1 Tunnel mouth
J3 Outside castle
J4 Inside gatehouse
J7 Near gatehouse
K1 Strongroom
K2 Dungeons
K3 Castle
K5 Under belfry
K6 In belfry
L1 In tunnel
L2 Dungeons
L3 Castle
L7 Near gatehouse
M1 In tunnel
M3 Outside castle
M5 Under sanctuary
M6 Sanctuary
N1 In tunnel
N3 Waterfall
N5 Waterfall
N6 Near palace
O1 In tunnel
O3 Near chateau
O5 Near palace
O6 Palace
P1 In tunnel
P4 Above chateau
P5 Palace
P6 Palace
Q2 In chateau
Q4 Above chateau
R2 Wine cellar
R4 Above chateau
S2 In passage
S3 Near chateau
T2 In passage
T3 In the woods
U2 Wine cellar
U3 Near village
V2 Near waterfall
V3 Near village
W2 Near village
W3 Near village
X3 Outer sanctum

Type-in Graphics Extravaganza



Type-in program listings hit the Amstrad Action pages this month – in response to your demands. We've taken the short programs here from a new book, *The Amazing Amstrad Omnibus*, whose 400 plus pages are chock full of interesting things to do with your Amstrad.

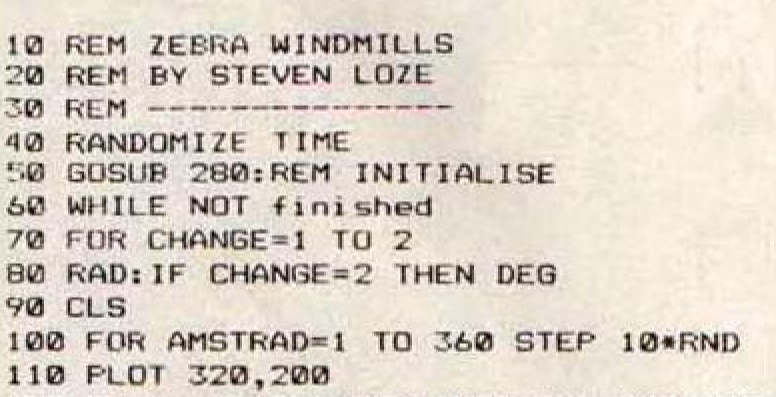
Each of the listings gives you an idea of what can be done with the Amstrad's graphics by running an attractive demonstration. As you can see, they're all pretty short so you shouldn't have any of those horrible experiences where you spend hours keying a program in only to find out it won't run.

The Amazing Amstrad Omnibus, by Martin Fairbanks, costs £7.95 and is published by Interface Publications, 9-11 Kensington High Street, London W8 5NP.

Zebra Windmills

This demonstration program uses the wide Amstrad pallette to create whirling, spinning shapes that are so pretty you could sit and watch them for hours. You'll understand the name as soon as you see the program running.

```
10 REM ZEBRA WINDMILLS
20 REM BY STEVEN LOZE
30 REM --------------
40 RANDOMIZE TIME
50 GOSUB 280:REM INITIALISE
60 WHILE NOT finished
70 FOR CHANGE=1 TO 2
80 RAD:IF CHANGE=2 THEN DEG
90 CLS
100 FOR AMSTRAD=1 TO 360 STEP 10*RND
110 PLOT 320,200
120 DRAW 320+250*COS(AMSTRAD),200+190*SI
N(AMSTRAD),((AMSTRAD MOD 3)+1)
130 NEXT AMSTRAD
140 GOSUB 170:REM PEN CHANGES
150 NEXT CHANGE
160 WEND
170 REM PEN CHANGES
180 FOR J=1 TO 26
190 FOR K=1 TO 3
200 INK K,J
210 FOR Z=1 TO 100:NEXT Z
220 INK K,0
230 NEXT K
240 NEXT J
250 GOSUB 280
260 RETURN
270 REM ----------
280 REM INITIALISE
290 MODE 1
300 INK 0,0:INK 1,26:INK 2,24:INK 3,6:BO
RDER 0
310 RETURN
```



REWARD

We're offering anything between £50 and £100 to readers who submit listings that are printed in Amstrad Action. Ideally, any programs you submit should be pretty short so that a print-out does not fill more than two pages at the most.

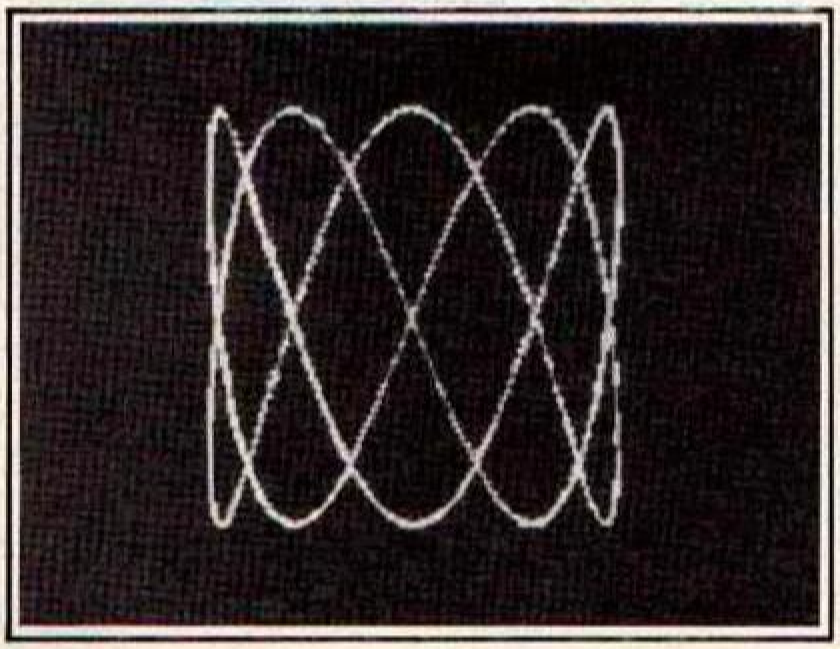
We're particularly interested in short utility programs that other readers will find easy to key in and useful or informative to run. But if you're a games writer, don't despair - if your program is top quality and not too long it stands a good chance of being accepted.

Submissions should be on tape or disc accompanied by a print-out and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Send them to: **Listings Editor, Amstrad Action, Valeside, Somerton, Somerset T11 7PS.**

Lissajoux Figures

Jules Lissajoux was a French physicist of the last century who made a study of the movement of particles under the action of periodic motion, acting at right angles to each other. Bodies moving in this way create intricate patterns as they dance around each other.

In this program – *not* written by M. Lissajoux – frequencies are generated at random (lines 120 and 130), starting a new figure each time you press a key.

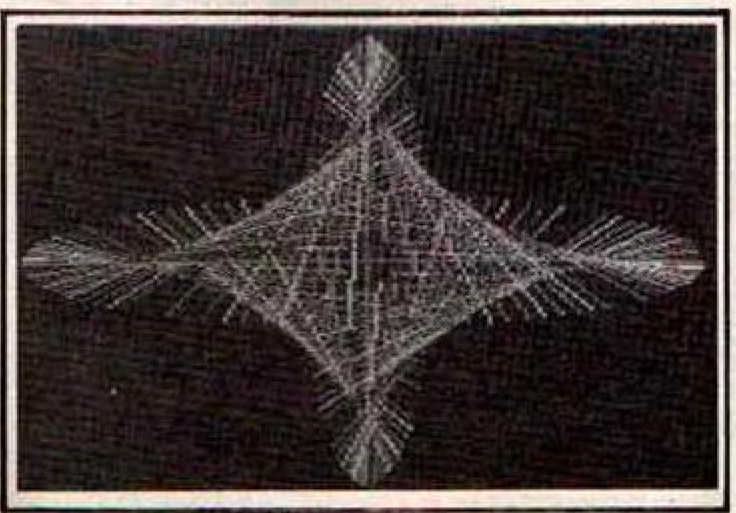


```
10 REM RANDOM LISSAJOUX FIGURES
20 REM
30 REM CREATES RANDOM LISSAJOUX
40 REM  FIGURES. PRESS ANY KEY
50 REM      FOR A NEW DESIGN
60 REM
70 RANDOMIZE TIME
80 MODE 1:INK 0,0:BORDER 0:INK 1,2:INK 2
,6:INK 3,24
90 IF INKEY$<>"" THEN 90
100 REM -------------------
110 WHILE NOT FINISHED
120 P=INT(RND*3)+1
130 LOZ=(INT(RND*3)+1)/0.8
140 GF=0
150 PLOT 300+120*SIN(GF),200+120*COS(GF*
LOZ),P
160 REM -------------------
170 WHILE INKEY$=""
180 GF=GF+0.1
190 DRAW 300+120*SIN(GF),200+120*COS(GF*
LOZ),P
200 IF RND>0.9 THEN P=P+1:IF P=4 THEN P=
1
210 WEND
220 CLS
230 WEND
```

Dionysian Spiral

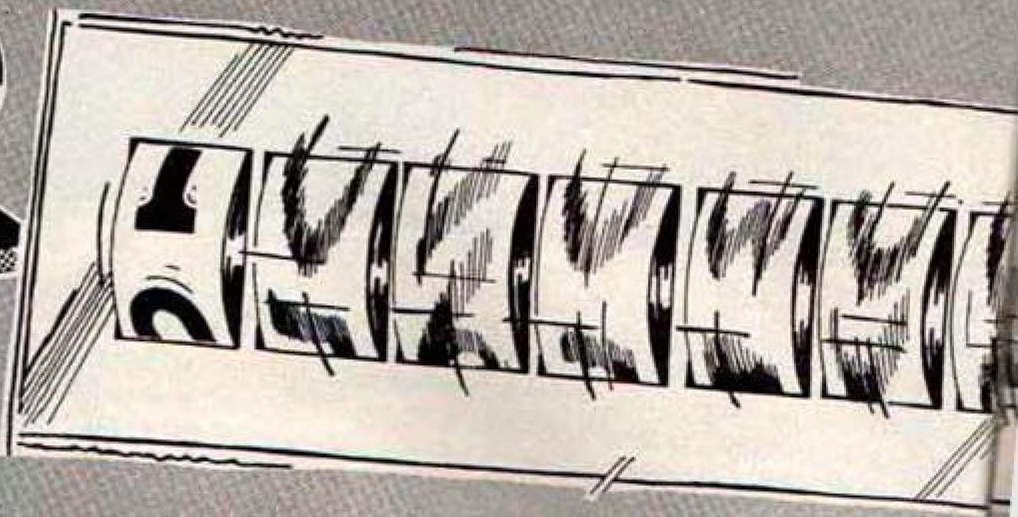
This is another very attractive graphics demonstration program. Don't worry about the flashing backgrounds at the beginning – they're intentional.

```
10 REM   DIONYSIAN SPIRAL
20 REM * HIGHLY EFFECTIVE *
30 RANDOMIZE TIME
40 INK 0,6:BORDER 6,2:MODE 0:CLG 0:PAPER
 0:SPEED INK 3,7
50 VARS=200:VIM=60
60 DIM Z(14)
70 FOR K=0 TO 14
80 INK K+1,K
90 NEXT K
```



```
100 INK 7,6,2:INK 2,24,0:INK 12,16,5
110 ORIGIN (VARS+2*VIM),VARS
120 FOR ALAN=103 TO 0 STEP -1
130 SUGAR=ALAN*PI/52
140 MOVE COS(SUGAR)*-VIM,SIN(SUGAR)*-VAR
S
150 DRAW COS(SUGAR)*318,SIN(SUGAR)*VIM,A
LAN MOD 13+1
160 NEXT ALAN
170 BORDER 6
180 REM -----------------------
190 WHILE NOT FINISHED
200 JUMP=0.3+RND
210 FOR T=1 TO 16+JUMP STEP JUMP
220 FOR K=0 TO 14
230 INK K+1,K+T
240 IF INKEY$<>"" THEN 350
250 NEXT K
260 NEXT T
270 FOR T=16 TO 2-JUMP STEP -JUMP
280 FOR K=0 TO 14
290 INK K+1,K+T
300 IF INKEY$<>"" THEN 350
310 NEXT K
320 NEXT T
330 IF RND>0.55 THEN H=INT(RND*15):INK 0
,H:BORDER H
340 WEND
350 MODE 1
```

Hi Score



Air Traffic Control
78% K Clarke, Telford

Amsgolf
58 shots P A Hyett, Cheltenham
65 shots Sheila Bannister, Hayes
65 shots Michael Shedden, Glasgow

Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton

Beach Head
122,000 Neil Cruickshank, Inverness
114,800 Martin Rae, Totnes
111,200 Campbell Jardine, Dumfries

Blagger
49,335 T Laniado, South Creake
49,025 Matthew Chester, Louth
47,575 Robert MacCallum, Edinburgh

Boulderdash
16,805 Ashley Cotter-Cairns, Hemel Hempstead
15,820 Andrew Barley, Scunthorpe
8,678 Paul Gill, Cheadle

Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge
3,636 George Reaves, Bradford
2,325 Kevin Barnes, Ipswich
2,145 Robert MacCallum, Edinburgh

Chiller
6,400 Simon Dean, Rutland
6,300 Jason Black, Wymondham

Chuckie Egg
382,160 Ashley Cotter-Cairns, Hemel Hempstead
256,430 Gary Callan, Exeter
252,670 Derek Henderson, Glasgow

Codename Mat I
1,050 Samantha Bell, Maidenhead
711 DG Scott, Dereham
478 Gary Wendleken, Brentwood

Combat Lynx
136,760 William Jenkins, Cramlington
50,550 Andrew Rogers, Herne Bay
49,400 Stuart Hutchinson, Reading

Confuzion
30,025 Paul Gill, Cheadle
21,917 Daniel Hart, Loughton
18,040 John Gigney, Chelmsford

Daley Thompson's Decathlon
1,711,600 Mat Brown, Exeter
1,180,820 Graham Bayliss, Warley
610,000 Graham Lyth, Great Sutton

Dark Star
123,400 Ian Boffin, Woking
3,100 Andrew Willis, Earls Barton
1,280 Junaed Mortuza, London

Defend or Die
2,099,250 P A Hyett, Cheltenham
776,150 Paul Gill, Cheadle
755,550 Graham Ross, Devizes

Electro Freddy
1,560 Lee Gatiss, Margate
1,500 SP Mackenzie, Aldesley Edge
1,285 Craig Thomson, Eyemouth

Everyone's a Wally
1,570 Antony Critchley, Bracknell
1,550 Mark Pinner, Bedford

Fireant
30,200 Mark Burford, Leamington Spa
18,200 Gordon Edgar, Buckie

Frank Bruno's Boxing
35,000 Martin Luise, Solihull
29,720 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne
29,190 Martin Johnson, Hull

Fruit Machine
£21.70 Thomas Lerrigo, London
£17.60 Joseph Dittman, Aspull
£17.20 Gavin Manning, Wanstead

Fruity Frank
16,075 Gary John Shanks, Livingston
15,600 N. Miller, Tonbridge
8,660 Stephen Gray, Haywood

Galactic Plague
44,190 L Walker, Liverpool
2,540 Spencer Timson, Leicester
1,440 Colin Henderson, West Kilbride

Ghouls
5,030 Jason Grandin, Cardiff

Gilligan's Gold
318,179 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield
209,659 Ian Mathie, Dunstable
95,964 William Freeland, Dalkeith

3D Gran Prix
6,875 Jason Black, Wymondham
4,535 Robert MacCallum, Edinburgh
2,500 Mark Powell, Northwich

Grand Prix Rally II
51,685 Paul Schofield, Leeds
49,765 David Lincoln, Leeds
38,134 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh

Harrier Attack
770,450 Graham Ross, Devizes
505,750 Ian Cousins, Winchester
452,000 Mark Powell, Northwich

Haunted Hedges
299,470 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield

Highway Encounter
76,120 Ian Boffin, Woking
35,870 Richard Dasent, Guildford
15,910 James Bastow, Westminster

Hunchback
1,508,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian
1,000,000 Kevin McKeown Jnr, Armadale
552,600 Paul Gill, Cheadle

Jet Set Willy
175 items Daniel Hart, Loughton
125 items Harpal Kooner, Birmingham
89 items Peter Jones, Maidstone

Juggernaut
9,500 Michael Speers, Donaghadee

Killer Gorilla
131,000 Ian Dunn, Cannock
110,000 Huw Jones, Paisley
100,900 Ian Ridley, Blundellsands

Kong Strikes Back
535,600 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield
79,000 Joseph Farrington, Warrington
44,900 John Gigney, Chelmsford

Laserwarp
62,380 Christoper Winstanley, Preston
36,500 Jonathan Newcombe, St Albans
21,000 James Leitch, Great Glen

Manic Miner
250,112 Wayne Learoyd, Bramley
92,804 Gordon Edgar, Buckie
65,900 Sateesh Rajah, Morden

Minder
£12,000 Mark Tozer, Canvey Island
£8,950 Paul Sutcliffe, Shaftesbury

Moon Buggy
110,930 Patrick Grant, Coventry

Mutant Monty
44,950 A Wagstaffe, Whitchurch
43,180 Alastair Kerr, Plymouth

Oh Mummy
20,000 Jon Scruby, Teignmouth
6,855 Mark Lewing, Camberley
5,250 Stewart Russell, Glasgow

On the Run
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park

Raid
229,250 Bob Wade, Somerton

Red Arrows
65,416 S Glendenning, Darlington

Rocky Horror Show
15 pieces Marcus John-Hopkins, Cwmbran
15 pieces Stephen Mead, Kenton
15 pieces Darren Hildrew, Sawbridgeworth

Roland Ahoy!
5,140 Mark Blakemore, Liverpool

Roland goes Digging
£264.80 Jonathan Williams, Sutton
£222.55 Billy Watson, South Queensferry

Roland in Space
47 pieces Craig Thomson, Eyemouth
34 pieces Jason Bloomfield, Ipswich

Roland in the Caves
898,540 Gary Wendleken, Brentwood
875,923 Andrew Peedle, Coventry

Roland in Time
132 crystals Gordon Edgar, Buckie
86 crystals Matthew Paine, Wymondham
81 crystals Darren Hildrew, Sawbridgeworth

Roland on the Ropes
1,310,975 Martin Ellerker, Peterborough
999,999 Adrian Johnston, Shrewsbury
695,000 Kevin Westwood, New Malden

Sorcery
97,982 Martin Luise, Solihull
97,949 Ralph Turner, Newport
97,500 GM Smith, Stockport

Sorcery Plus
109,036 Ian Boffin, Woking
97,608 Alexander Clark, Aberdeen
97,550 Nick Chamberlain, Stroud

Space Hawks
74,850 Gary Callan, Exeter

Spannerman
65,000 Stephen Gray, Haywood

Star Avenger
16,220 David Rice, Glasgow
14,895 Peter Clark, Glasgow
11,230 Stuart Russell, Glasgow

Star Commando
4,359,600 Daniel Ives, Luton
184,800 Ian Mathie, Dunstable

Starion
11,000 GJ McGouran, Saltley
1,728 Stewart McCone, Pontefract

3D Starstrike
13,500,110 Gary John Shanks, Livingston
10,031,000 Joseph Farrington, Warrington
3,450,000 Ian Boffin, Woking

Steve Davis Snooker
112 break St John Bird, Fakenham
65 break Paul Smith, Huddersfield
43 break Malcolm Porteous, Edinburgh

Super Pipeline II
1,228,055 Graham Ross, Devizes
426,460 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne
260,325 Amanda Grieve, Houghton Regis

Survivor
241,100 Scott Brown, Cumbernauld
210,500 Michael Shedden, Glasgow
154,800 Scott Williamson, South Queensferry

The Way of the Exploding Fist
2,193,000 (10th Dan) Matthew Lerrigo, London
662,300 (10th Dan) G.D. Holloway, Brockley
443,100 (10th Dan) Mark Blakemore, Liverpool

Wizard's Lair
75,500 Barry O'Sullivan, Erith



The national Amstrad game-players' hall of fame

Here's the latest selection of your increasingly impressive high scores, plus the first exciting challenge and a couple of other useful suggestions from readers. Keep them pouring in! Become famous! Knock Bob Wade completely off the page!

Players' forum

No WAY of the Fist

I would like to prove that two of the scores given on the high score table for *The Way of the Exploding Fist* are impossible.

The maximum score that can be achieved per opponent is when you defeat him with two flying kicks in three seconds. This gives you 2,000 (Kicks) + 2,700 (Bonus) = 4,700. With two opponents per Dan this gives a maximum of 9,400 for each Dan completed. Therefore the maximum 7th Dan score is 65,800. This disproves Mark Mamone's score of 220,000 (7th Dan).

The maximum 9th Dan score is 84,600. This disproves Mat Brown's score of 510,160 (9th Dan), which is also impossible because the minimum number of points you can score is 100 – so where did the odd 60 come from?

Paul Hankin
Hounslow

Sounds pretty convincing to us Paul. And unless we hear an explanation from Mark and Mat those scores have got to go. A number of other readers also challenged the two scores so the weight of opinion is definitely against them. I hope the two of you aren't going to take this bodyblow lying down, so to speak. Let's hear soome witnesses for the defence.

Meaningless score

My favourite game is *DT's Decathlon*. I don't see any point in submitting a high score in the true sense as anyone can, with a bit of practice, get through a day without losing more than one life. i.e. the high score has no element of skill – it just depends on how long you play it. Millions of points are possible, given a good reason for playing over and over and over again.

I would therefore like to introduce a new challenge – the most points in one day, i.e. after you have done the events ONCE ONLY. My best is 130,360 for this and I have a witness. For your information my best for the events themselves are:

100m 13.06 secs
Long jump 8.89 m
Shot 20.70 m
400m 38.23 secs
High jump 2.46m
110m hurdles 13.33 secs
Discus 56.92m
Pole vault 5.00m
Javelin 83.81m
1500m 223.51 secs

Can anyone beat this?

Steven Dunn
Cookham

It sounds like an excellent idea, Steven. So from now on, let's have single-day scores sent in, rather than wrist-cramping scores that take hours on end.

If anybody else spots a mistake of their own (or a misprint!) then do let us know so that nobody else challenges you.

Humble apology

I am writing to apologize about the score I sent in on *Fruity Frank*. It may have been me that wrote down the score wrong or it could have been you. Anyway I beg your forgiveness and let all the readers know, mainly so nobody challenges me. I don't know how I would stand up to a challenge. My real score is about 5,090. Once again I am very sorry.

Robert Shepherd
Sutton-On-Sea

No need to be so apologetic Robert. These things do happen. Don't they? We've struck your name from the table but you're only 3,000 off getting back on to it. So keep trying.

If anybody else spots a mistake of their own (or a missprint!) then do let us know so that nobody else challenges you.

THE ALL IN-ONE ACTION ENTRY FORM

Fill in as much of the form as you wish. Then cut out the ENTIRE form (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to: **Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.**

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!

Name ____________________
Age ____________________
Address ____________________
____
Telephone number ____________________

High-score challenge

I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

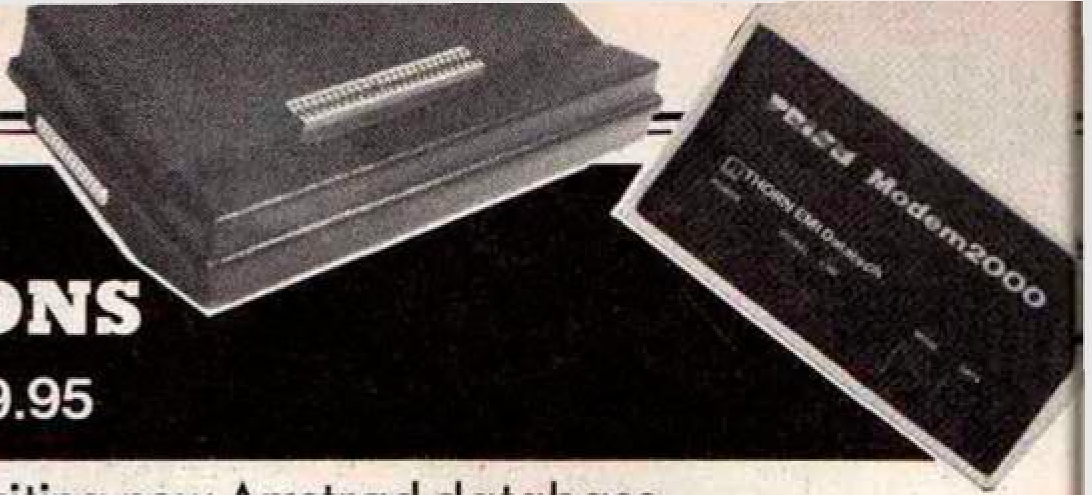
	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.

Signed

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► All connecting leads and documentation.

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This package is especially suitable for anyone wanting to hook up to the new Amstrad database being launched on Prestel micro-computing by Viewfax and Micronet.

The Skywave interface is currently the ONLY one approved for use with this database and capable of down-loading the free software on offer. Bought separately the interface costs £99.95, so it's definitely worth buying it as part of a package. (The modem and other items bought separately would cost at least another £60).

In addition to accessing Prestel, you can use the modem to communicate with the growing number of private bulletin boards which operate on 1200/75 baud. This is fast becoming the national standard. However some smaller bulletin boards still work on 300 baud, and you should note that the modem in our package is not able to access these. It is however a British Telecom approved modem which has proved reliable and easy to use. It is NOT an acoustic modem – it plugs directly into a standard BT phone socket, and contains a similar socket into which you plug your telephone for dialling through to the database of your choice. This arrangement ensures more reliable transfer of data than an acoustic modem which simply listens to the noise coming out of your telephone ear-piece.

The package will be sent to you direct from Exeter-based Modem House, one of the country's largest suppliers of modems. Meanwhile if you want to get on with applying for a subscription to Prestel microcomputing so that you can get on-line as soon as your modem arrives, why not send for an application form from: Micronet 800, Durrant House, 8 Herbal Hill, London EC1R 5EJ.

And if your modem arrives before you've joined Prestel you could always try dialling some of the following free 1200/75 bulletin board numbers: 0224-641585, 0734-786568, 01-863-0198, 01-341-7840, 01-609-3931, 0626-890014, 0493-781334, 0268-778953 0272-421196, 0602-289783, 0277-228867, 0936-77025, 0224-641066, 061-736-8449, 01-941-4285, 01-346-7150, 01-740-5017, 01-888-8894, 01-679-6183, 0492-49194, 01-631-3076, 01-606-4194, 0392-53116, 0734-78568, 0268-22177.

Only one question remains – can you resist the lure of the hacking bug?

Communications Package offer form

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Game chart voting form

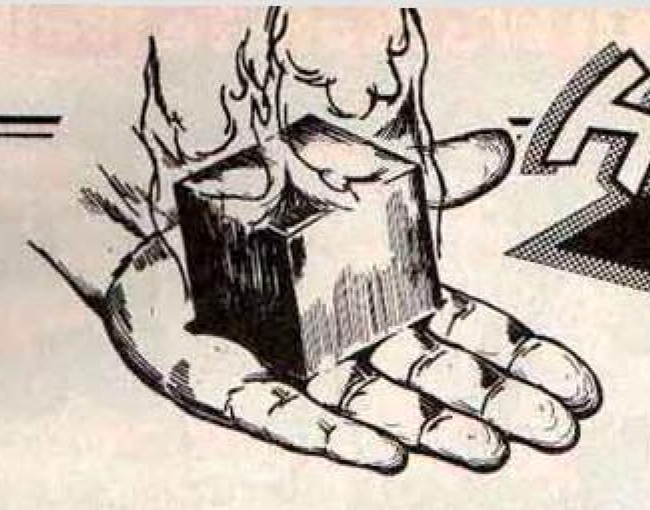
I would like to vote for the following game(s):

GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
		Total number of votes = 10



HOT STUFF

Amstrad Action Readers' Charts

It's time for another exciting instalment of our Readers's Charts. Has *Sorcery Plus* maintained its lead in the games section? Or has *Way of the Exploding Fist* smashed into top place? Can Ultimate hold their own in force again in the top twenty? Is *Mini-Office* still the serious users' favourite, or have they all defected to single-purpose software?

Enough of the questions. Read on to find out what Amstrad owners are loading up this winter.

Yes, *Fist* has done it! That is, it's ousted *Sorcery +* from the top of the charts. Both games have smaller percentages of the total vote this month – a sign of the quality of the opposition – but are still comfortably clear of the Ultimate challengers.

Most significant chart newcomer on the games side is last month's Mastergame, *Highway Encounter*. The Vortex thriller looks set to make a very big impression on the consciousness of the games-playing nation. Durell's *Combat Lynx* has also made its presence felt in a big way.

Otherwise there are few surprises. But the games chart is bound to feature some of the latest Christmas games next month.

The Serious Software chart also sees the two most popular programs changing places. Are they going to take turns for ever? *Tasword* has now edged into the lead. Anything to do with the release of the 6128 version? *The Quill* – an adventure writing utility – and Interceptor's *Azimuth 2000* are the most impressive new entries.

GAMES TOP 20

1. Way of the Exploding Fist
Melbourne House (13.3%)

2. Sorcery/Sorcery +
Virgin/Amsoft (12.0%)

3. Knight Lore
Ultimate (7.0%)

4. Alien 8
Ultimate (4.1%)

5. Combat Lynx
Durell (3.5%)

6. Dun Darach
Gargoyle (3.0%)

7. Frank Bruno's Boxing
Elite (2.2%)

8. Steve Davis Snooker
CDS (2.1%)

9. Lords of Midnight
Beyond (1.8%)

10. Boulderdash
Mirrorsoft (1.7%)

11. Jet Set Willy
Software Projects (1.6%)

12. D.Thompson's Decathlon
Ocean (1.5%)

13. Cyrus Chess
Amsoft (1.5%)

14. Highway Encounter
Vortex (1.3%)

15. Football Manager
Addictive Games (1.2%)

16. Starion
Melbourne House (1.1%)

17. Dark Star
Design Design (1.0%)

18. 3D Star Strike
Realtime (1.0%)

19. Fighter Pilot
Digital Integration (0.6%)

20 Rocky Horror Show
CRL (0.5%)

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

1. Tasword/Amsword
Tasman/Amsoft (18.0%)

2. Mini Office
Database (14.0%)

3. Transmat
Pride Utilities (7.2%)

4. Masterfile
Campbell Software (6.5%)

5. Devpac
Amsoft (6.4%)

6. The Quill
Gilsoft (6.3%)

7. Screen Designer
Amsoft (5.9%)

8. Electric Studio Light Pen
Electric Studio (5.9%)

9. Easi-Amsword
Amsoft (2.9%)

10. Azimuth 2000
Interceptor (2.4%)

The Voting System

For anyone new to our state-of-the-art voting forms and system – or anyone STILL having trouble – here's another run down on what to so and how to do it.

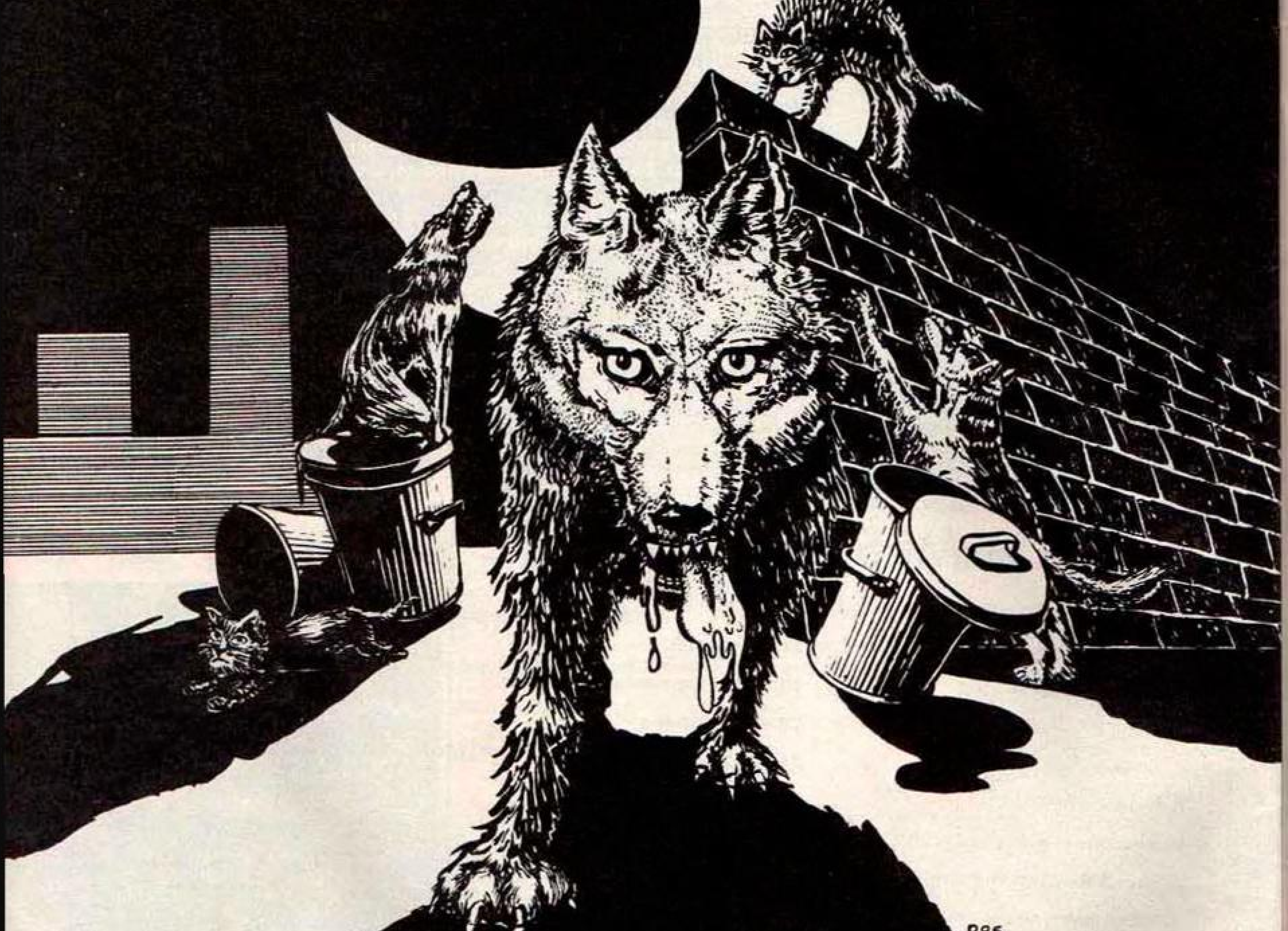
You have at your disposal a TOTAL of 10 votes for each chart. These can be split up any way you like on up to five titles, but the number of votes you give to the different titles must add up to 10.

For example, on the games chart you could give all 10 votes to a single game. Or you could 5 votes to one game, 2 to another, and 1 each to three others. You just have to allocate your 10 votes to reflect your preferences as accurately as possible. What you CAN'T do is give five different games 7 or 8 votes each. That's greedy.

One further thing you certainly can't do is send in photocopies of the form. There have been attempts at jiggery-pokery in the past, so we want to avoid any possibility of it happening again.

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Here's how it works: you send us £15.50 (if you live in the UK) for a 12-month subscription and we send you not only your favourite (well, OUR favourite) computer magazine each month for a year, but also a very special Christmas gift of two of these amazing US Gold games.

The games are in fact worth £9.95 each, making a total saving of, I make it, £19.90 – as I was saying, quite insane.

There isn't any catch. We're just exceptionally, ridiculously keen to have your company over the next 12 months.

As you can see from the offer form, you don't quite have a free choice of any two games. They're divided into two groups of three, and you can't choose more than one program from group B – you must either take two from group A or one from each group. But since all six are pretty juicy, we don't think that's much of a limitation. Come on in and join Britain's friendliest Amstrad club.

Blurb Writer

Start of the US Gold rush

It probably hasn't escaped your notice that over the last 18 months US Gold has become Britain's most prolific software house, licensing all the best American software for distribution in the UK. But so far most of the titles it's released have only been available on other micros.

Now all that is changing. The six programs pictured on this page represent the start of a major push onto the Amstrad. All six titles have had massive sales on the Commodore 64, and US Gold has been employing the services of some of Britain's best Amstrad programmers to make the conversions to our machine. The three conversions we've seen at time of writing (*Beach-Head*, *Bruce Lee*, *Raid*) have all been extremely impressive – *Bruce Lee* and *Raid* were given AA Rave reviews in our November issue.

Suffice to say we could think of no more exciting range of games to help persuade you to subscribe to Amstrad Action.

Advantages of subscribing

There's more than one reason, apart from the prospect of superb free software, for taking out a subscription to Amstrad Action.

- You're guaranteed each month's copy, delivered hot off the press straight to your home – no frustrating trips to newsagents who've sold out.
- You guard against any future price rises in the magazine.
- You qualify for further special offers in future issues.
- You give valuable support to Amstrad Action, the magazine written for Amstrad addicts by Amstrad addicts.

Existing subscribers read this!

Even if you've already subscribed to Amstrad Action you can still take part in this special offer – in two different ways.

EITHER you can fill in the form on this page in the usual way, and send it to us together with £15.50 in which case we will send you your two free games and extend your subscription by another 12 months. If you do this, please write the words EXISTING SUBSCRIBER on the form after your name.

OR you can simply order any of the six games for a special subscribers price of £6.95 each. To do this simply write down on a piece of paper your name, address, the subscriber's number printed on your address label (if you can find it), and the games you want to order. Send it to: Subscribers' order, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS, together with a payment of £6.95 made out to Future Publishing for each game ordered.

If you live outside the UK

You'll be pleased to know that even if you live outside Britain you can still take advantage of this offer, only we have to charge more to take account of the substantially higher postage costs.

The rate for anywhere in Europe outside the UK and Eire is £25, payable by sterling cheque or international money order.

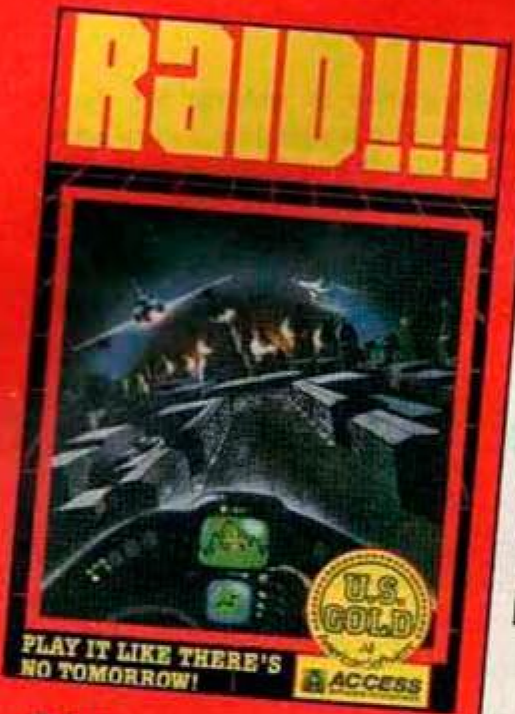
For Eire the rate is still £15.50, but this payment must be made in pounds sterling, not Irish currency.



BEACH-HEAD

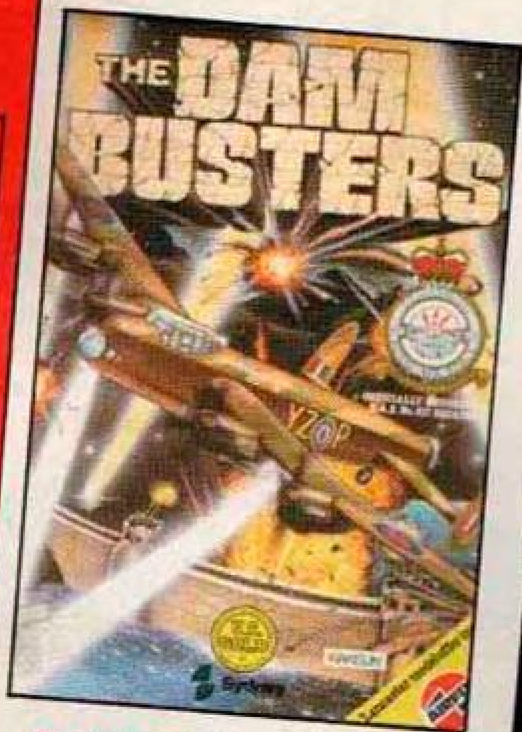
This program caused a sensation when first released in the UK with its dramatic 3D depiction of naval warfare. You control a fleet of ships which you must guide through several very different battle stages before taking the fight onto land with a tank assault on the fortress of Kuhn-Lin.

Pick up TWO



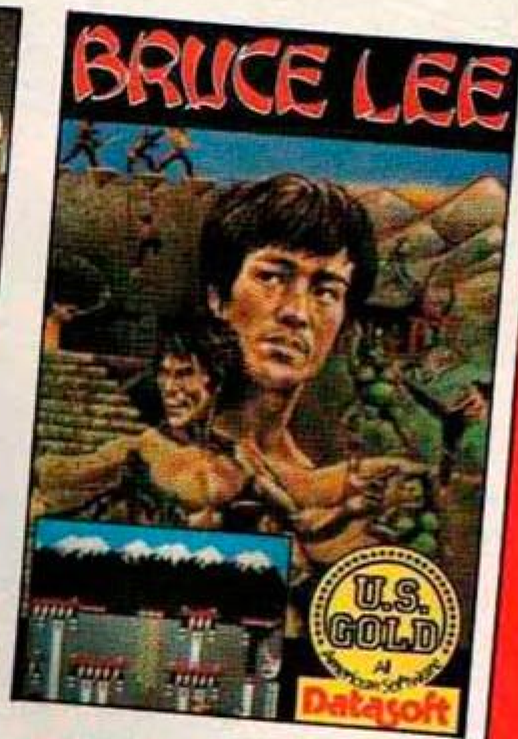
RAID

The dramatic and controversial follow up to *Beach Head* in which you organise an air strike on nuclear missile silos to try to preempt a launch against American cities. Follow this up with an attack on a building which looks uncomfortably like the Kremlin. Probably the most exciting shoot-em-up on the Amstrad. Excellent graphics.



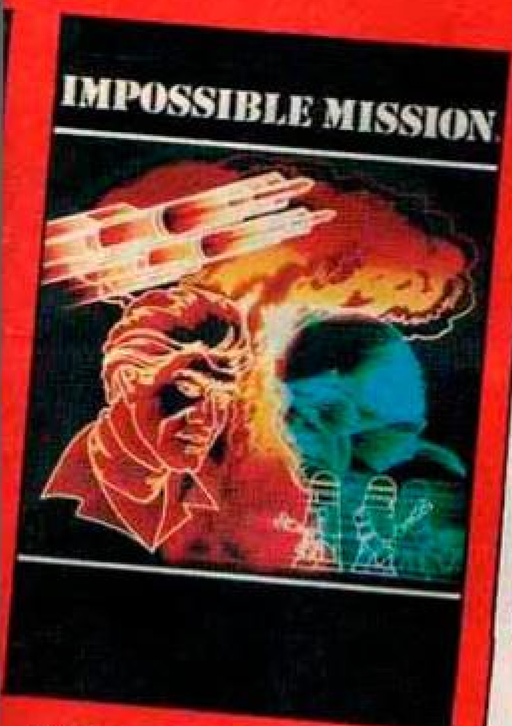
DAMBUSTERS

A flight simulator with a difference. You take on the jobs of all seven crew members of a Lancaster bomber as you re-enact the famous 2nd World War bombing mission. The program offers you several different control panels, plus views through the cockpit window as you weave past search-lights, flak and barrage balloons before launching your bouncing bomb. Superbly atmospheric.



BRUCE LEE

A highly-entertaining platform game in which you take the part of the famous martial arts hero. Punch and kick your way through 20 screens of devious obstacles, hounded all the while by the cunning Yamo and Ninja.



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

The original version of this game made everyone's eyes pop out with its astounding animation. Explore an underground network of robot-patrolled rooms in search of passwords which will eventually destroy the evil Professor Mindbender. Superbly original, brain-stretching platform action.



BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK

Miner 49'er was the program which started the craze for wacky platform games. Bounty Bob is its follow up, developed in the States over many months, and it's more addictive than ever with 25 diabolically difficult screens. Matter transporters, hoists, slides, suction units, cannons, pulverisers – they're all there.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Apart from *Beach-Head* released in the summer, all these games are extremely new. Indeed, at time of writing these pages several have not yet been released. They are all due out by the time this magazine goes on sale or soon afterwards. However in software production delays can easily happen, and if either of the games you order is not yet available it will hold up the despatch of your parcel.

If you're keen to get the software promptly, please refer to the Ed Lines page for the latest information on release dates and choose your programs accordingly.

CHRISTMAS SUBSCRIPTION OFFER FORM

Yes please, I would like to take out a 12-month subscription to Amstrad Action and receive two free US Gold games.

Name,..

Address,..

....

....Post-code,..........

The game(s) I would like from group A is/are (please circle one or two games – if you circle two, you may not select any from group B):
BEACH-HEAD RAID IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

The game I would like from group B is (circle a maximum of one – but if you circled two in group A, do not circle any here):
DAMBUSTERS BOUNTY BOB BRUCE LEE

I have circled a total of two games and enclose a cheque or postal order for £15.50 (or international money order for £25 for readers in Europe) made out to Future Publishing.

Post your order to: Christmas subscription offer, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

of these £9.95 games for FREE

NEXT MONTH

Christmas is coming. The goose is getting fat. So is Amstrad Action – because we're preparing a very special, bumper Yuletide issue. We all know it's that stuffing that makes the turkey, and inside our next number you'll find everything to keep you going through the Christmas period and well into the new year. It's going to be a pretty juicy issue, so keep the Alka Seltzer to hand.

▶ 1986 Diary

A lighthearted look into the AA crystal ball reveals all the goings on in the wonderful world of Amstrads.

▶ Serious Software

If you're not the feeling the pinch of giving just yet, you soon will be. So what better than to see what the Spreadsheets and Accounts packages can do for your bank balance? We bring you a massive festive survey of moneyprogs.

▶ Brain Teasers

Get the old grey matter going again with our Yuletide selection of puzzles – you could even win yourself a prize in the new year.

▶ Adventures

The Pilgrim returns from his travels for the merrymaking. He brings glad tidings of comfort and joy for adventurers, and an interesting piece on Adventure Design programs.

▶ Serious Software

If you're not the feeling the pinch of giving just yet, you soon will be. So what better than to see what the Spreadsheets and Accounts packages can do for your bank balance? We bring you a massive festive survey of moneyprogs.

▶ Maps galore

Yet another top-secret caper is taking place in the Maps and Special Ops room at AA. They're charting another monster game, and another, and another. And look out for those adventure maps you might get free in time for the pud.

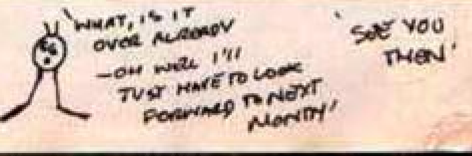
PLUS

- ▶ **ReAction** – your right of reply
- ▶ **Type-ins** – more lovely listings
- ▶ **Amscene** – all the latest news
- ▶ **Cheat Mode** – how to crack those games

Available from Thursday December 12th!!

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 See you next month, hasta luego, auf wiedersehn, au revoir, ciao...




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